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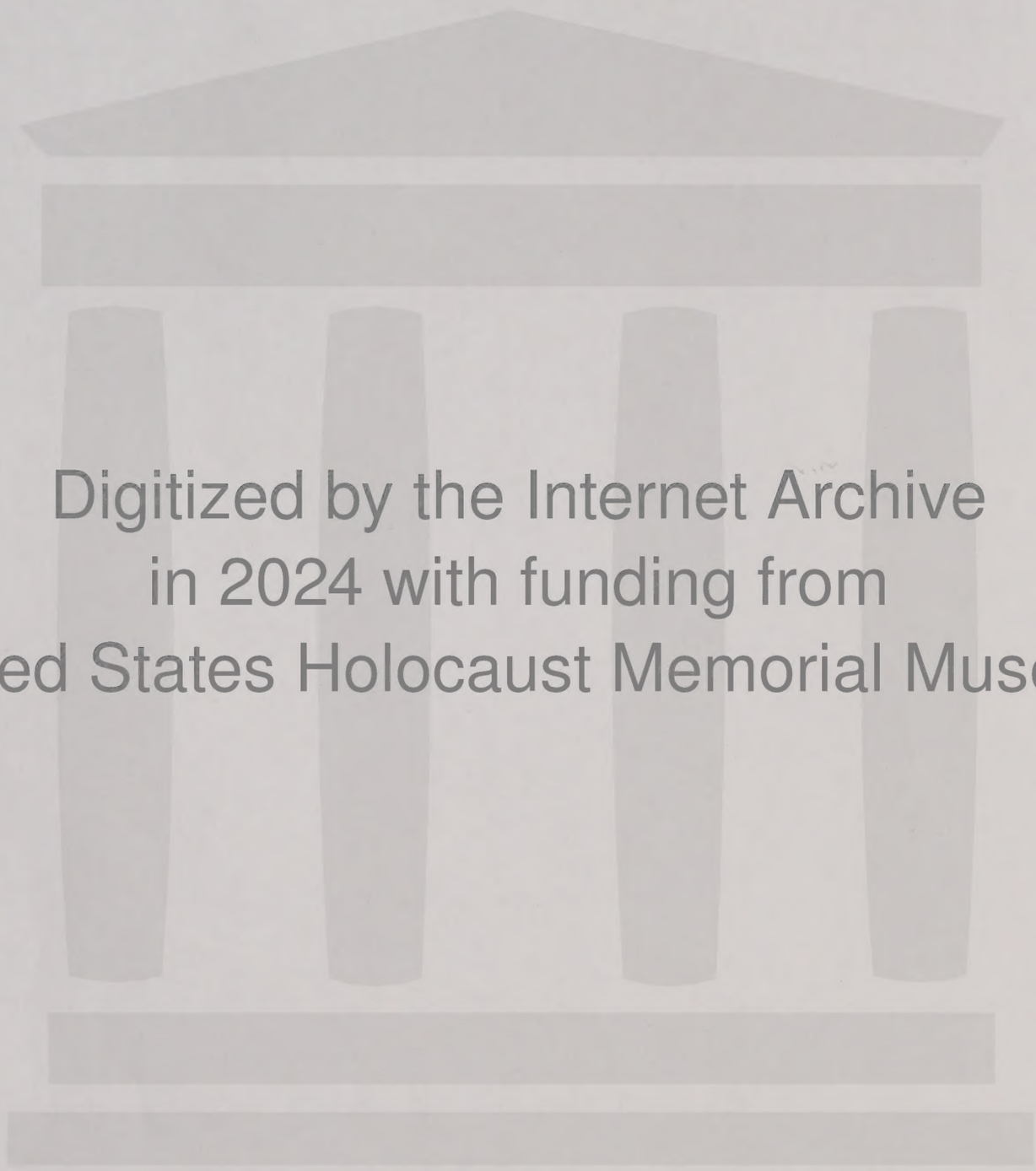
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MY NINE LIVES

Memoirs by Anne F. Heineman

Anne's Memoirs

Insecurity has been a major reason for all kinds of acts of violence and just simply selfishness since the world began. Although many young people in this era almost defy anything that constitutes security, it still has a meaning for those of us in the latter part of life and particularly for those of us who have had to fight to attain security.
By this word I do not mean material wealth, although not having to worry whether there is enough to buy food for the next day is an important part of feeling secure. Rather I mean the sense of not being afraid for one's life and being able to plan a future with the certainty that there is a future for which plans can be made.

Many young people now blame the older generation for putting them into an imperfect world created for them, and it is considered the worst thing a parent can do to say "when I was young, ..."

It is the human instinct of every parent to want to protect his or her offspring from the same unpleasantnesses he had to encounter in his youth. For that reason Warner and I have gone out of our way to remain in the same neighborhood since our marriage, so that our children may enjoy growing up with the same friends they had when they were young and so that they may know the security of a permanent and lasting home.

It is one of the blessings of life that the happy events are remembered far longer and more clearly than the unhappy ones. It is only occasionally now that I am reminded of the past. Usually this reminder comes through a remark from a casual acquaintance at some party: "I love your accent. When did you first come to this country?" It is a benign enough question, often just to make conversation, but frequently also to satisfy curiosity. It was on one of these occasions lately that I began thinking and remembering.

The neighborhood where we lived is a suburb of Berlin called Charlottenburg. It is on the west side of town, not far from the famous Funkturm which sends and receives all radio messages in and out of town. We lived in a four story apartment building which at that time was considered a "high rise". On the third floor was our very large apartment consisting of three bedrooms, a maid's room, living room, dining room, den (called Herrenzimmer since it was mostly used by the men), music room (called salon) plus kitchen and separate pantry. The building was located directly across from the Lietzensee Park, and all our windows looked out onto the park and the adjoining lake. The latter was surrounded by weeping willow trees which provided us with a constant array of colors.

In the summer the bright greenery of the hanging branches and surrounding well cultivated flower beds was dazzling. In fall the leaves were red and golden, and in the winter the branches hung heavy, covered in thick white snow. Did I appreciate all this beauty as a child? Probably not, or at least not until I was forced to leave it behind, but more of that later. In the summer small row boats dotted the lake, ~~and in the winter,~~ and in the winter the colorful skaters were gliding along, accompanied by soft music.

Not only did I walk to and from school through the park daily, but after school, or more correctly after homework, it provided a perfect playground. Most of my friends lived within a short distance, and we would meet in the park in the afternoon to jump rope, play marbles or ball or bicycle along the specially designated paths.

Up until school age, my brother, Rolf, and I had a Kinder-fräulein, a nanny, who saw to it that we spent lots of time in the park, first in the pram, and then taking our first steps there. Of course Rolf was 5 years ahead of me and was allowed to take his ball or tricycle to the park long before I could match him in those activities. When I started school, our faithful nanny left us for England, and we missed her for a long time.

Things had been almost too perfect until my first three or four years in elementary school. Katya was my very best friend, and we shared a desk almost throughout our years at the Witzleben-schule. Being best friends meant a great deal to both of us, and we spent all our time together, in and out of school. Even during classes we had to share secrets, and there always seemed to be something to talk about. Herr Michelchen was our teacher throughout the elementary school years, and of course he knew both of us well. Only because we were good students, did we get away with talking and frequent separations. In the end Herr M. would always relent. "Fischerchen, if you behave yourself, I'll let you sit with your friend again", he would say, and with that the friends were united again. After school, we would walk home together and, soon after our homework, be on the telephone with each other again.

Oh, to be so fancifree and have no worries! Thinking back, a seven or eight year old probably has her own worries within her own sphere, but certainly at this stage it seems that those years were the most carefree of my life.

Certainly my home life was secure and content. My parents had always been madly in love with each other, and love was always readily demonstrated in our family, both between my parents and between parents and children.

My father came home daily for the mid-day meal which was the main meal of the day. It was eaten slowly and "mit Genuss" (with enjoyment), served by the maid only when everyone was ready for the next course. After lunch, my father would go back to his office and return around 7 p.m. for a cold supper. In other words, things went along in a pretty orderly fashion for several years, and I was a happy kid who felt secure and loved.

It was a mid-winter day in 1936, and Berlin was glistening in a white mantle of snow. There was a park right across from our apartment house, and the lake was frozen solid. The thickness of the ice was sufficient for the welcome sign to appear 'Skating Permitted'. After all, in Germany anything that is not specifically permitted, is usually prohibited. The weeping willows around the lake were bare of leaves now, but instead a white layer of snow was covering each branch, and the ghost-like limbs were hanging even lower than usual.

The elementary school was at the other end of the park, two large red brick buildings adjoining each other, one for boys and one for girls. The playgrounds, too, were adjoining, but there was a wire fence between them, and on each side children walked around and around in neat rows during recess. There was no lunch break since school hours were from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., after which one went home to eat the main warm meal of the day. However, six hours is a long time to go entirely without food, particularly for a growing child. Consequently, we had little thatchels hung around our necks, carefully filled each morning with sandwiches, fruit and cookies to be eaten during the mid-morning recess. These little thatchels were called sandwich bags and balanced to a small degree the big leather thatchels carried on our backs. The latter contained our books and were heavy as heck at times.

This was my fourth year in school and therefore the last in elementary school. At age 10 most German children at that time would transfer to a high school - a vocational school if they are so inclined or an academic high school if their plans include university and a profession. A number of children continue their education in the elementary school for the next four years and end it completely after eight total years of schooling, thereafter usually to become a blue collar worker or craftsman of some kind. Ours was decidedly an upper middle class neighborhood, and consequently most students intended to transfer to some sort of academic high school.

Mr. Michels had been our one and only classroom teacher for the past four years, and I simply adored him. There was good reason for this since, being a very good student, he had a soft spot for me too, me and my best friend, Katya, that is. Since my first name, Anneliese, was extremely popular in those days, there were five girls by that name in my class of 30. Consequently, to distinguish between the various Annelieses and since he called on me rather often, Mr. Michels called me Fischerchen (a diminutive of my family name Fischer), and Katya he called Schäferchen, her last name being Schäfer. "Fischerchen", he would say, "what can you tell me about Frederick the Great", and our secret giggles would be interrupted by a little concentration for a change.

Our classroom benches were made for two students to share, and Katya and I spent a good part of the time that wasn't interesting enough to us in class chatting to each other. We were separated about ten times a year for talking in class. However, sooner or later, we always managed to get Mr. Michels to let us sit together again, at least until the next talking episode.

Any time now we should hear if we had been accepted in the high school of our choice. Katya and I had applied to the West End Lyceum, an excellent academic high school for girls which only accepted the top 8 per cent of the grade school graduating class.

These were worrysome times. After all, it was 1936, and Hitler was making his presence felt. My brother, Rolf, was already in the Gymnasium, the academic high school for boys, but for some reason his school was the first high school in Berlin to discharge the old-time, democratically-minded teachers and replace them with young, Nazi educated instructors. It took my parents a few weeks to discover this with the aid of Rolf's frequent bloodied noses plus a humiliation in class he was almost loathe to discribe to us. "All Jewish boys stand", his teacher would say. "You others are free to beat up these creatures as soon as class is over."

I had watched the skaters on the lake on the way home from school and arranged with Katya to pick up our skates the minute we got home to dump our books and eat the mid-day meal as quickly as possible. It was too wonderful a day not to be out on that icy lake, skating to the music. How smooth the skaters looked waltzing back and forth.

I knew something was wrong the minute Martha, our maid, opened the door of our apartment. "Your mother wants to see you in the study", she said rather curtly.

From the large entrance hall of our apartment a corridor led both to the left and to the right. To the left were my brother's and my bedrooms which were adjoining, the door between which was usually open. Next to it was a room that had for years been occupied by the Kinderfraulein, but which was now empty and served as a guest room. Across the hall were a large kitchen, pantry and small maid's room. Off the right side of the corridor were the huge living room, a music room which contained our grand piano and some very ornate Louis XIV furniture, next the study commonly referred to as Herrenzimmer (gentlemen's room), and way at the other end was my parents' large master bedroom.

"Did you have a good day in school, Annelie", mother said, and I could tell it was the preliminary to something much more important.

She was sitting in my father's deep leather armchair, the most comfortable one in the room, but she did not look comfortable. She was sitting very straight but only occupying the front half of the chair. There were several other armchairs in the room, all in a deep green, faintly checkered velvet-like material. There was also a sofa, an oak coffee table, a large oak desk and in one corner a card table with four chairs. The latter was usually topped by my father's ivory chess set, on which he made a few moves whenever he had time.

"School was fine, but aren't we eating dinner now? Katya and I want to go skating right afterwards."

"There is something I must tell you before we eat. We got a letter from the West End Lyceum today. You are

In fact, the ones who are there already will have to leave immediately. Of course Katya has been accepted as they are still taking half Jews". "But Katya and I just have to go to school together!" "I am sorry, my dear, but that does not seem possible." "Oh" is all I could manage to say. And after an uncomfortable silence: "Why don't you ask Mr. Schneider if he could do something?" Mr. Schneider was the Assistant Principal at that school and a friend and neighbor since he lived on the next floor down.

"Mr. Schneider called already, apologizing", mother said. "You know how it is", he had told her, "I would be dismissed instantly if I were to ask favors for a Jewish girl. You know I like and respect you and your family, but if you want to help me and my career as an old friend, please don't greet me in the elevator any more. You know it is safer not to have any Jewish friends these days."

Our meal was eaten in silence that day. The music played as usual for the skaters on the lake, but Katya and I did not feel like joining the skaters today. We walked silently through the snow. Why did life have to change? Wasn't I just as good a student as Katya? Why didn't the high school want me? And how could being Jewish hurt a school?

When Papa came home in the evening after a busy day in his law office, we discussed my going to one of the two private Jewish schools in the city at the start of the new school year in April. It was a bleak prospect for none of my friends were going there. Katya had been accepted at the West End Lyceum since she was only half Jewish and was registered as a Protestant. We never did go skating that afternoon. Somehow the mood was gone, for even a ten year old can feel the tension in the atmosphere. In my first semester in my new school we were to learn the following. In German it rhymes, but it does not lose too much in the translation:

Never forget that you are a Jew,
A person with extraordinary obligations.
That scale with which you tend to measure others
With it you should first measure yourself.
If only one Jew forgets himself,
Immediately thousands must suffer for him.
Always remember that you are a Jew.
Go through life with pride and modesty.

II

"I wish you wouldn't kiss me in front of my friends!" my brother said in a most embarrassed voice. "It sure is a nuisance to have a little sister hanging around." I couldn't see anything in the slightest embarrassing.

Contrary to yours truly, Rolf was a serious, quiet person, introverted to the point of shyness. I suppose in their basic characteristics people usually do not change over the years. On school days he arrived home about half an hour after I did since he rode his bicycle to and from the Momsen Gymnasium, the academic boys' high school, located in the Grunewald, a beautiful forest in the western suburbs of Berlin.

Rolf had told us recently about the change-over of teachers, how they had discharged all the good old academicians and replaced them with young Nazi disciplinarians.

"Any economic down-trends in Germany", a history teacher had told the boys recently, "have always been the fault of the Jews. They are using all the country's money to their own advantage and have always taken the best jobs away from the decent Germans."

Rolf was 15 now and was in his fifth year at the High School. He was not one who needed large numbers of friends, but he had always had a few and got along easily and well with the rest of his classmates and teachers. A couple of times a week his school day extended into the late afternoon since those were the days his class had athletics after school. This was not one of those days, and he should have been home about an hour ago. "Do I continue to keep the dinner hot for Rolf", Martha wanted to know. "Try it just a little longer please. He always telephones if he is delayed somewhere". "Maybe he went to a friend's house and forgot to call."

Mutti did not say any more after that, but she became increasingly more nervous. She sat in the corner of the living room pretending, or maybe trying, to read. Instead her gaze was directed out of the window at extremely short intervals, and I could see that her eyes held not only anxiety but fear, the nature of which I had never seen in those eyes before. Mutti had beautiful eyes then, big and brown, and they exhumed a brightness that told of warmth and kindness.

I had brought my school books into the living room, not my normal place to do my homework, but the uneasiness was spreading, and I felt too far removed and isolated in my room.

By 5 o'clock the front door finally opened, and Mutti and I both rushed into the entrance hall at the first sound of a key turning. At the sight of her son, my mother let out a loud groan, and within a minute my tears started to flow. There stood Rolf, blood covering his face, his nose swollen to double its size and two black eyes which were hardly visible under all the caked blood. His clothes were covered in snow and mud, and his fleece lined jacket was torn from the collar to the bottom of one sleeve. His lip was bleeding and he wiped it with a piece of material hanging from his sleeve.

"What happened to you?"

"Our Social Studies teacher got the boys all worked up today." His voice sounded belabored, and the swollen lip did not help any. "He made me stand up several times during class as an example of the Jews who are destroying this country. He told them that there was no room for people like us in modern Germany and that all Jews need to be eliminated." There was a long pause, and noone said anything. I noticed that Martha was listening from near the kitchen door. "After school was out, they waited till I got off the school grounds, and then about six of them beat me up. My bike is broken, and I had to walk home. It's a wonder they let me live." Rolf sank exhausted into a chair.

There had been several Jewish boys in each class when Rolf first started at the high school several years ago. Lately, since the change-over of administration and faculty, most of them had left the school either to leave the country altogether or to transfer to one of the two private Jewish high schools in Berlin. There was only one other Jewish boy left in Rolf's grade, and the two of them had been ridiculed and harrassed almost constantly during the last few weeks. This, however, was the first real violence we had heard about.

By the time my father came home for supper around 7 p.m. Rolf was cleaned up, his clothes changed, and his broken nose had been set by the doctor.

"He must leave the country just as soon as we can make arrangements," was my father's first and immediate reaction to our recounting of the day's events. "I'll try to find a good boarding school in England. It's the only way the boy can expect to have a decent future." In 1936 a Jewish adolescent could still get a temporary exit permit for study purposes.

Our Kinderfraulein, who had been with us for about ten years, and who had been like a second mother to us at the time, had wanted a change of scenery when we outgrew her about five years earlier and had gone to England for no political reasons but to satisfy an adventurous spirit. In Kent she had become the governess of three children and, faitful soul that she was, was still with them. We had remained in correspondence with her about two or three times a year, and it was to her that my father now wrote

Within a couple of weeks an answer came. It appeared that the mother of her three wards, Mrs. Arregger, being a full-time mathematics teacher, had a good knowledge of boarding schools in the counties surrounding London. She particularly recommended a school in Hazelmere, Surrey, and a letter was dispatched to its principal immediately.

Realizing the urgency of the situation in Germany, the administrator answered almost by return mail. It was within two weeks that the student exit permit was obtained, his wardrobe replenished, and we were driving Rolf to the airpoirt.

Since my brother was not the most communicative even then, I never did find out how he felt about his sudden change of invirons. I know that he acted most manly and composed. I also know that for me those two weeks were traumatic. Even though rather extraverted, strong willed and spending most of my spare time with my many friends, I was extremely attached to home and parents, and the thought of either of us having to leave for an indeterminable time was like a nightmare to me. I remember, as if it were today, crying bitterly for what seemed like an age and having my mother reassure me at least twenty times that they would NEVER send ME away like that, no matter what the circumstances.

What a good thing we are not able to look into the future. It is one the few times I suppose when ignorance is bliss.

III

As soon as Hitler came to power, in 1933, he issued quite a few edicts against the Jews. Most of them concerned the preaching of the supremacy of the Arian race and the fact that Jews had no place in such a society. Inter-marriages between Jews and non-Jews were forbidden, and those already part of such a marriage were encouraged to obtain a divorce. The rare cases, such as those of my two uncles, one of whom was married to a Protestant and one to a Catholic, were the individuals strong enough to withstand all the harassment and tribulations in the long run. Our family was unusually close-knit, and my two aunts never questioned their remaining part of that family and keeping their own marriages as close as ever.

Another one of the original Nazi orders in 1933 was that any Jewish attorney, who had not been a front line soldier during the first World War, lost his licence to practice law instantly. Since my father had been a front line soldier for 4½ years from 1914 to 1918, he had been permitted to continue his practice. At the time he was pleased and relieved of course, looking back on it later, it might haved spared the Fischer family a great deal of grief if he had lost his profession at a younger age and thus been forced to emigrate before the heighth of the pogroms, and moreover while it was sstill relatively easier to leave Germany.

Although not hard of hearing at that time or ever, my Dad always had a ratheer loud voice; and particularly in the court-room, trying to make a point for his client, this was not exactly minimized. I knew because I had listened to a couple of his major trials from the visitors' balcony.

He had told us that in a recent trial (I no longer went to watch these days) the SS had tried to intimidate two of his Jewish witnesses. SS was the abbreviation for Storm Standard or Troopers), these being specially trained, one hundred per cent Nazi oriented and "stop at nothing" minded uniformed barbarians.

When Dad came home this particular evening, he seemed especially worn out, but his aggravation and foreboding sense of the next few days at court would not let him relax. We had almost finished supper, when the phone rang. It was one of my aunts who, with her her husband, lived only a block down the street, telling Mutti in a breathless voice that she just saw two SS Troopers march toward the entrance of our apartment building.

"Tell Oskar to leave by the back door immediately and hurry over to our place. Be sure to waste no time!" Her voice was urgent.

My mother looked at my dad and with her head indicated the kitchen end of the apartment. It was Marta's day off today, and I think we were all relieved not to have to go through any explanations as to why the man of the household was leaving by the rear door.

No sooner had the sound of father's footsteps disappeared down the back steps, than the doorbell rang. Mutti had outwardly composed herself in an instant.

"We would like to speak with Dr. Fischer personally. It is rather important." This without greeting or any preliminary.

"I am sorry, but my husband has not returned from the office as yet, and I really have no idea what time he will be home."

"Alright. We'll just wait in your living room till he gets here then." With that they burst into the living room and sat on two chairs facing the door.

Mutti had told me to go to my room and read, but I was understandably apprrehensive and stayed as close as possible to my open door.

An hour went by and two. I heard the SS men talk in whispers, but no sound from my mother.

Suddenly the shrill ring of the telephone penetrated the silence.

"Oh, we are fine, just fine. No, I really don't know when Oskar will be home. I have company right now. So I'll talk to you tomorrow." Only I could detect from Mutti's voice that she had just spoken to my aunt and tried to indicate that my Dad should stay put.

The SS men stayed at our house until about midnight, then gave up, saying that they would return the next day. At breakfast time my father came home and told Mutti why they were after him. He had represented a Jewish client in court against the SS, and the latter felt that no Jewish attorney had the right to do such an outrageous thing.

"Naturally I can't keep running. So I might as well go to the Police station to turn myself in before I jeopardize your safety and Annelie's." Before leaving, Dad had telephoned a Gentile attorney friend and expressed hope that he would still be willing to fight his case.

The next six weeks were very anxious ones. Mutti spent most of her time in the attorney's office or attempting to talk to the judge in between other cases. She did not give up easily and tried to get audiences with any official who would listen.

To add insult to injury, our maid, Marta, decided to quit our household during this worst of all times. When my mother was at court one day and I at school, she packed her things and quietly departed. When I came home to an empty apartment that afternoon, I found a note on the dining room table that looked as though it had been written in haste:-

"I decided for my own safety that it is better not to work for a Jewish family under present circumstances. Good luck to you all. Marta."

Approximately six weeks later they must have got tired of seeing Mutti's face around the judicial offices for they sent concentration inmate Oskar Fischer home at last. It was a broken man who walked through that front door of ours that spring evening. He had lost about 20 lbs., quite a lot for a rather short stature. His cheeks were hollow and his face sallow and unshaven. The lines on his forehead had turned into deep furrows. In spite of his appearance, he tried to talk cheerfully:

"I worked almost harder in the jail cell than I do in my office. There were always around fifteen other men in the cell with me. Many were there for no other reason than being Jewish like myself, but the hardened criminals were put into the same cell, and they each wanted me to tell them how much time they would get. Believe it or not, I was really in demand."

After Dad had returned to his office a day or two later, Mutti tried to get a new maid. After all, the apartment was very large, and she had never been used to doing the household work herself. There was no point to look for anyone other than a Jewish maid for others were by now not permitted to work for Jews. After all, it could end in "Rassenschande" (sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews). I soon learned that Jewish people do not make ideal servants. Each one answering the advertisement would preface the interview with:

"Frau Dr. Fischer, I want you to know right away that I come from an excellent home and have never had to work as a maid before."

Mutti finally hired Miriam, more because she seemd trustworthy than because she knew anything at all about housework.

IV

The private school, to which I now went, turned out to be lots of fun. As usual, I became active in school affairs and soon became Sprecherin, the official spokesperson for my class in student affairs. I enjoyed French particularly, learned easily without much apparent effort, and received top grades in everything but Physical Education. Gymnastics in Germany was exactly what the word implied, namely real gymnastics. We were expected to jump leather horses, balance on high parallel bars, climb ropes and turn summersaults over the bars. Even though by now I was 12 years old and psychologically rather brazen, my physical courage had decreased rather than increased with age. Each report card contained a similar notation:-

"Anneliese's academic capabilities are excellent. However, she must learn to become more courageous physically." Why has it always been so important for a student to excel in P.E.? How much more I would have enjoyed the American school sports, then unheard of in German schools.

It was 1938, and Rolf had been home a couple of times for Christmas and summer vacations. However, this summer his stay was suddenly cut short.

"I heard through the grapevine at the office today that all Jewish passports are being confiscated by the end of the week. Rolf must return to England immediately." My father made the announcement as soon as he sat down at the supper table.

This time it was a particularly sad farewell for now a return visit was just about out of the question. My brother had suggested our leaving too, but that was easier said than done. There were few countries that had opened their doors to German Jews, none within the Western Hemisphere, unless certain conditions were satisfied. In England adults could only obtain an entrance permit through a citizen in high standing, and for the U.S. one had to have an affidavit, i.e. an official statement that a U.S. citizen would be financially and morally responsible for the German Jew in question.

How could one get such a thing without even knowing any U.S. citizen? Anyway, Papa was in no hurry to leave. Here he still had his profession and his comforts, and what would he have abroad? Neither of these, not to speak of the fact that his knowledge of English was non-existent.

By November his confidence and optimism about the future were utterly shaken. It happened all in one night - one horrible, unforgettable night, later known as Kristallnacht.

I was awakened by the shouts in the streets interlaced with loud screams. I rushed to the window and saw fires blazing in several directions. A rock came flying through the window next to me, and in an instant I ducked under the sill. The sound of shattering glass brought both my parents into the room.

"Into the hall, quick. Bolt the front door, and don't go near the windows!"

Every footstep on the stairs made us huddle closer together. The Nazis must really be on the rampage now. The phone rang. It was my aunt:

"For God's sake don't leave the house! They have broken into all the Jewish stores, smashed windows, looted and set Jewish offices and shops on fire. They are picking innocent Jews up by the thousands and carting them off in big trucks to the concentration camps." She was almost hysterical. "Imagine, they took Max and his whole family. I tried to call Walter and discovered from a neighbor that he and mother were already taken away!"

She was referring to my mother's younger brother who had lived with my 80 year old grandmother. Oma, my good Oma! I had been tremendously attached to my maternal grandmother and had spent a great deal of time with her whenever I could. And now she had been sent to a concentration camp. They couldn't do such a thing!

Max was the husband of my mother's younger sister, and they had two daughters, all taken to the camps now.

Once more my father came through with his instant decisions.

"Annelie must leave on the very next children's transport to England. We were lucky this time, but we cannot afford to wait for the next pogrom."

Great Britain had made a special announcement just the week previously, saying that they would take as many children between the ages of 2 and 16 from Germany and place them with British families. No passports or exit visas were needed. It was less than two weeks before my actual departure date. Arreggers had been written to immediately, and they had gladly consented to take me into their home. Transports of Jewish children were now leaving regularly for England, and persecuted juveniles under 16 needed only to apply. If they knew noone abroad, they were usually sent to a collection center until a home could be found. If, however, as in my case, a home was already available, it was that much faster to get a place on a transport.

I remembered the promise my mother had made me in 1935, when my brother left, never to send me away, but after what had happened to most of my relatives during the night of November 9th, I did not dare voice a complaint.

"Will you join us in England soon?" I asked anxiously of my parents.

"Yes, soon. As soon as we can." I did not know then how much wishful thinking was contained in that answer.

"Now Voyager, sail forth
To seek and find."

It was a grey day in late November when the 56 children assembled at the Berlin railway station. All parents had been instructed not to cry. What a blessing that was not a requirement for the children. We were to take the train to Hamburg and then the ship from there to Southampton. The children ranged in age from 3 to 16 years, and the older ones were immediately informed that it was their duty to look after the little ones since there were only two actual transport leaders, two efficient but nervous ladies from the Jewish Family Agency in Berlin. Each child was given a large sign to hang around the neck inscribed with the name of its owner as well as the address to which he or she was assigned at the destination.

"I feel like a dog with its collar on", I was thinking amidst the confusion of crying children and parents. Oh why do I have to go with all these kids I don't know to a strange country where I don't speak the language, to people I have never met and with whom no doubt I won't even be able to communicate. French had been the only foreign language I had studied at school so far, and all I could say in English was yes and no. It was a good thing everyone else was crying too, so that at least I didn't have to feel self-conscious.

The train ride was only a few hours, but I saw absolutely none of the scenery. Oh, I was looking at it alright, staring as a matter of fact, but seeing only the imaginary pictures in my mind. Huddled in my corner by the window, I tried to imagine what Mr. and Mrs. Arregger were like. Did they really want to have me in their home, or were they merely feeling sorry for innocent people who were being persecuted by the Nazis? Maybe they didn't even care for Jewish people but felt obligated because the ex-governess of their children, who incidentally had moved to a family in Africa a couple of years earlier, had told them so much about us. Would they consider me a burden? And how would they treat me?

My thoughts were interrupted by our arrival in Hamburg. More confusion. The ship looked so big and formidable. The peer seemed grey, huge and dismal on this cold November day. Many of the younger children in the transport began to cry again - some out of fright and loneliness, some out of confusion. I wanted to walk away a little, watch the smaller cargo ships being loaded or just simply be by myself, but I was afraid to be left behind, to be even more alone in a world that seemed to have forsaken me during the past few days. I discovered later that I was only in the second Kindertransport to leave Germany and that in all England accepted 10,000 German refugee children without parents or passports.

Our parents had been told that we would be allowd to take the world-shaking amount of DM 10 with us. Just before bording the ship, we had been told to form a line by the customs shed. When my turn finally came after an hour's wait, the customs officer bellowed at me: "Do you have any money?" "Ja, 10 marks", I replied. "Give them to me!" With a shaking hand I handed over my entire wealth. "Here", with that he handed me back one mark and shoved me up the gang plank. Oh God, what if my new foster mother did not pick me up? With one mark I probably could not even pay the train fare.

Now the whole group was on the ship and separated by ages, usually four boys or girls to each cabin.

I don't remember too much about the crossing, except that I was sea-sick the entire time. That is a feeling not easily forgotten, a sense of not being able to live and yet not being able to die. I would imagine the likelihood of sea-sickness would be greater in a person already in a depressed state, and, as I heard later, the vast majority of children in my transport were desparately seasick. Whoever said that children don't get seasick?

From Southampton we took another train to London, and there at Waterloo Station the identification signs around

our necks really proved their purpose. Men and women by the dozens were hurrying up and down the platform, bending down to each group of children they saw to read the different signs until each had found the particular child entrusted to his or her care. I was lucky: Rolf had taken the day off from his job (he had graduated a year or so earlier) and come to meet Mrs. Arregger to introduce his sister to her new foster mother. I have never blessed his presence as much as I did that day. At least for a few hours he could be the interpreter. Mrs. Arregger seemed like a warm and friendly person, but who could tell when you can't understand a thing she is saying. This is what it must be like to be deaf and mute, I decided.

In Mrs. Arregger's car we drove out to their house in Kent. It was a quiet suburban street, tree lined, and white picket fences surrounded many of the houses. In the spring and summer, when leaves cover the now bare branches, it should be pretty. A group of girls, all dressed identically, walked down the street.

My brother explained that they were wearing their school uniforms, something I had never even heard of in Germany. Would I ever feel at home here? I noticed the Arreggers were calling him Ralph, and he told me that he had anglocized his name while in boarding school. I was hoping he would not have to go back to London and could instead stay with me at the Arregger's, but of course that was impossible. Ralph needed to work to pay for his room, food and other essentials and, if possible, even to save a little toward the time when, hopefully, our parents could join us in England. It was now forbidden to take any money out of Germany legally or to send any money for our living costs as they had done during the first few years of Ralph's schooling in Surrey.

Just before Ralph left that evening, some friends of Arregger's dropped by. They were doubtlessly curious to see the little refugee girl their friends had told them they were taking in.

"How come she doesn't have a hooked nose?" was the first comment the man made (translated to me in whispers by Ralph) after they had looked at me in amazement. I couldn't believe my ears. Did they publish the 'Stuermer' in England too? 'The Stuermer', meaning the storm trooper, was a Nazi propaganda sheet published by the SS throughout Germany, depicting ugly carricatures of Jews and deriding anyone not considered one hundred percent Aryan.

In bed that night I cried myself to sleep, bemoaning the loneliness in my new-found deaf-mute world. I was sharing the room with the middle one of the three Arregger children, the older of the two girls, and had to bury myself under pillow and blankets, so that she could not hear my sobs. Actually, it was impossible to have even your nose sticking out of the blankets anyway for I discovered that English people did not believe in heating bedrooms, and since it was already winter outdoors, the unheated bedroom seemed icy. The only warm room in the house was the living room, where a roaring fire was kept burning all day, but bedrooms were meant to be cold. It was much healthier that way, I heard later, although many years later, when arthritic pain twinged down my thighs, I had good reason to dispute that theory.

V

Life at Shawfield Park, Bickley, Kent a new experience entirely. It began with porridge for breakfast, a heretofore unheard of edible. I detested it at sight, and more so at taste, but forced it down not to offend my new family. If I needed something, I pointed and was immediately told the English word for it. Each time I repeated it shyly, and after a few meals, I knew most of the words for eating utensils and several foods.

All the Arregger children were younger than I. John, the oldest, was closest to my age and only a couple of years my junior. My room-mate, Marian, was next at age 8, and the youngest and liveliest was Susan, aged 5. Strangely, I played the most with the youngest, probably because I felt the least inhibited with her. John was the most sympatico of the three, helped me the most with my English and, in general, became my friend. On very cold nights he would even sneak a hot-water bottle upstairs to warm my feet before going to sleep. Marian, somehow, was the most difficult for me to win as a friend. Maybe being the middle child, or the oldest girl, in her family, she had felt the competition that threatened with my arrival the keenest.

Mr. Arregger was kind, but extremely strict. Each one of us had definite assigned duties in the household. We took turns in carpet-sweeping under the dining room table after each meal, drying the dishes for the maid, polishing the shoes for the family and generally helping around the house. Being the oldest I was assigned the added task of washing down all the doors in the house once a week. Since I had never done any housework at home, I felt very put-upon at first, but any thirteen year old could probably fit into a new life-style without much difficulty, particularly when there is no choice.

Every Sunday morning Mr. Arregger took us all for a long walk. Then my new linguistics were questioned, and I had to talk as best I could.

Even before I could understand very much English, in fact after only one week in my new home, I started school. Since Mrs. Arregger taught daily in a school in the next county, she knew many people on the local school board. Thus she managed to get me a free place in an exclusive girls' school. In late 1938 it was a good mark for any school administration to be able to say that they gave a free place to a refugee child from Germany.

Stratford House was an old established school where the girls came almost exclusively from upper class English homes. The old brick building outwardly resembled a large mansion surrounded by carefully cropped trees, extensive lawns and, to one side, the playing field, used in the fall and winter for Lacrosse. The headmistress always wore a black, flowing robe over her conservative dress, and there were only female teachers. In fact, no man was ever allowed to cross the threshold, and about half the student body, who were boarding students and did not go home in the late afternoon the way I did, did not see a male for nine months at a time.

History was our first subject in the morning, and when the teacher entered the room, the entire class stood, curtseyed and said in unison "Good morning, Miss Proctor."

During my first few weeks at Stratford House I was always seated next to a top student in my grade and instructed to copy all the notes she took and to study them carefully when I came home that afternoon. I kept the notes for a long time, and it was not until many months later that I realized what nonsense I had written in many instances. If I could not read the other student's handwriting or a word in a sentence, I would write the nearest thing it resembled to me, which at times was either no word at all or a word which completely changed the meaning of the sentence.

We had no choice in subjects, and part of the carriculum was a class called Scripture. Since all the girls participated in the class, I presumed that they were all Protestants. It never occurred to me to ask to be excused. Besides, I had had enough of being different in Germany and was certainly not going to be different here. Thus each day I had a lesson in the New Testament. A teacher had suggested shortening my name to Anne which was easy and so much more pronounceable for everyone. In fact, I decided that the sooner I could make my speech sound like everyone else, the better off I would be.

My English classmates were very aloof, and, although I had never had that problem before, I found it difficult to make really close friends. Many nights I poured over my old 'Poesi-Album' which contained farewell messages and notes from my old German friends.

I worked hard, and Mrs. Arregger helped in explaining the British weights, measures and monetary values. After the metric system to switch to pounds, shillings and pence, ounces, pints, quarts, inches, feet and yards was quite an adjustment. Perseverance was something I acquired right then.

Before long, Mr. Arregger asked me to teach his children German, and the Sunday morning walks turned into German lessons, equally hated by the Arregger offspring as by myself.

English students were extremely well behaved, disciplined and obedient. Now that I have had children in the American school system, I can well appreciate what difference an orderly classroom can make to more rapid and complete learning. Day pupils, who were less than one-third of the student body at Stratford House School, knew to leave their overshoes outside the school entrance Japanese fashion. Once inside, lockers held name-labeled moccasins with soft soles to be worn strictly indoors.

The school was divided into three houses - the Elizabethans, the Victorians and the Alexandra House. I belonged to the latter, proof of which was a large A on the tie of my uniform.

Classes started promptly at 8 a.m. The teacher entering her classroom found all students in their proper seats and quiet as a mouse.

"Good morning, girls."

"Good morning, Miss Proctor", as each girl stood and curtsied by her desk.

Before sitting again, 'Our Father' was said in unison and then came the roll call. I learned to say the prayer with bowed head long before I knew enough English to know what the words meant. Once a week all classes met in the auditorium for combined prayer and announcement of the quantity of A's received by each student during the previous week. These were read in order of classes with the oldest ones first, and accompanying applause for the largest number of A's. The latter were particularly applauded by the other members of the House to which the grade recipient belonged since each House was continually competing with the other two for having the largest number of especially bright members. As each form (as classes are called in England) was being called, those girls stood as the name was called of each House member who had received an A the past week. The headmistress in her long flowing black robe made the other announcements, after which we returned to our classrooms.

The most understanding teacher to me was Mademoiselle, the French teacher. The reason was probably two-fold: Being foreign herself, she no doubt knew what it was like to learn another language from scratch without the benefit of anyone speaking your mother-tongue and the loneliness that automatically went with the process. Secondly, and maybe equally important, any teacher likes a good and easy student. Somehow it is easier for German-trained tongues to pronounce French than for English speaking people. Thus my pronunciation was better and more fluent than that of the rest of my classmates. Thus my French obviously sounded better.

I never knew whether Mademoiselle appreciated the time it took me initially to do my French translation homework for, until I could think in English, I had to translate the French into German and the German into English in order to do the assignments. Needless to say, there was not much time left for socializing, particularly since the amount of homework assigned each day was, by American standards, tremendous. Also, since most of the girls were boarding students, it was not possible to meet after school was out. I had to walk straight home to Arregger's to start on my homework, while the boarding students were strictly supervised for their study hours. All teachers were female as I said, and so strict was the supervision, that no male was allowed within sight of the girls. Even the milkman had to leave his school deliveries outside the gate.

My most difficult subject of course was mathematics since I had never heard of a place before where twelve pennies made a shilling and twenty shillings a pound; where eight ounces make a pint and two pints make a quart. Whoever thought up such craziness? And who had ever heard of someone being weighed in stones? To top it all, at age 12 English students had already had a year of Algebra, whereas their German peers were just beginning the subject. Had it not been for Mrs. A. being a math teacher and tutoring me in that subject, I could not have caught up.

Members of each of the three houses were represented in each grade and class, and they competed with each other more intensely than sororities.

Other than the identifying house letter, our uniforms were identical: A navy blue wool dress in the winter with a blue striped tie and white collar, a navy coat, black velour wide brimmed hat with a band of the school colors, white knee-length socks and black saddle shoes, dark brown galoshes for rainy weather which had to be removed at the first door leading into the school building. In the summer we wore a short sleeved light blue cotton dress with white collar, same tie and shoes, white bobby socks, a straw hat

with school band and a navy blue blazer with the school emblem on the pocket. Our underwear, of course, was identical also.

The happiest day of the week was Saturday, when I was allowed to journey to London to spend the day with my brother. Since the trains had separate compartments, inaccessible to each other except from the platform, I had strict instructions always to sit in the 'Ladies Only' compartment. One of the first complete sentences I could say in English was: "A child's day return ticket to London, please."

At the other end, Ralph would be waiting as eager as I for the reunion, although he always pretended to be very matter-of-fact. His rented room was in North West London, a good distance from Charing Cross Station in the heart of the city. Any other person would have taken the 15 minute bus ride to Hampstead, but not the Fischer kids. After all, I had no money at all except for my return ticket, and Ralph was trying to save as much as possible out of his meager earnings as an office trainee. So we walked.

"Is it a lot farther?" I would ask every ten minutes until I discovered after an hour or more just how far we had to walk.

Often a package from my parents would be awaiting us in Ralph's room. If it came during the week, he would save it for my visit on Saturday. It usually contained salami sausages, cheese and cookies, so that our lunches were well supplied. I also discovered what it meant when my mother had written in her last letter "the pudding I sent you is particularly good." Ralph then knew to open that pudding or raisin package very carefully as in it we would find a silver spoon, precious stone or ring. Since there was no legal way of sending one's money or belongings out of Germany any more, the small items of our household all arrived concealed in food packages, possibly to be exchanged into much needed cash some day.

Ralph and I would usually spend at least part of the day discussing how we could get our parents into England.

Hitler was not making it easy for adult Jews to leave the country, and England required all kinds of assurances before issuing a visa. An acquaintance of Ralph's knew Roy Jenkins, a member of Parliament, slightly and promised he would speak to him on our behalf. So, many Saturdays were spent contacting this man and asking him what he had been able to achieve with the M.P.

Surprisingly, it was equally difficult to persuade my father to even want to emigrate. From his point of view I now feel it was understandable, although I did not think so at the time. He was an attorney and could not practice his profession in any other country without going to law school all over again. He was now 56 years old, not a time of life when drastic changes are made easily. He knew that Jews could not take any money out of Germany and that it would not be easy for him to find work, not only due to his age but also because his ability to speak English was almost non-existent. This was one time when knowing Latin and Greek did not help a bit.

It was 1939, and the world situation was becoming more and more precarious. Hitler had taken Austria, and even the British were getting a little less complacent.

I was doing well in school and in two successive semesters had won the Best Student trophy. If I could win it a third semester, I would be able to keep it.

In August we heard from Mr. Jenkins, M.P. that he was able to process the papers to obtain a visa for my parents. What joy! Father's resistance had finally been broken down, and they arrived in London by the end of the month.

Thus came the end of the second phase of my life, the loneliness in a new and strange country.

VI

It is not easy to transplant an old tree, or even a middle-aged one for that matter. Somehow the roots have taken hold in a certail soil, and the branches and leaves have been flourishing in one climate. To move the entire household from Germany to England, even under the threat of life or death, was a tremendous adjustment for my parents, by now both in their 50's. The Nazi regime would permit no money to be taken out of Germany, and consequently, after having been extremely comfortable all their lives, they were virtually penniless.

Ralph's boss provided them with a room in his large home for a week or so until they had found a house to rent for the Fischer family. This in itself proved quite an ordeal. Since Ralph's job was in the Southern industrial sector of London and my school was located in Kent, an area South West of London, my parents obviously looked in the south west sector of the city. Perforce it had to be a lower middle-class area also as, for the time-being at least, Ralph's wages had to pay the rent.

Luckily, my parents had been allowed to bring some of their furniture. It was therefore decided to rent a larger home in which to open a boarding house. After all, while Mutti's English was quite good due to her having taught languages many years ago, Dad spoke hardly any English at all, and a living had to be made somehow.

Of course I was happy to be able to move back with my parents, and Ralph too gave up his room and joined us. All the same, I remember being horrified at my first glimpse of our new home. It was an ancient, red brick, three story building, attached to the house next door. All the houses in the street looked so identical, that close scrutiny of the number was the only thing that made it identifiable. There was a close-cropped green hedge in front and a small garden over-grown with weeds in back, the main area of which was a lawn that had not been mowed in a year.

Upon entering, one was in a narrow entrance hall, from

which to the right led the parlor to the front and the large living room to the back. The staircase was to the left, behind which was the door to the oldest kitchen I had ever seen. Besides the old refrigerator, there was a tall free standing cabinet for dishes, and a large unfinished wooden table stood in the middle. There was even an open fireplace in one wall. In the rear of the kitchen a door led to a small, even older pantry which held a simple stove on one side and sink under the window. Across from the stove was the rear door which led to the garden and also to a tiny toilet, accessible only from the outside.

Between the first and the second floor was the only other bathroom, i.e. toilet behind one door and tub and sink through another next door. There were three rooms on the second floor, my parents' large bedroom as well as another large bedroom which was assigned to Ralph. My room was tiny, so small in fact that a regular bed did not fit along any of the walls. Hence I slept on a narrow sofa that barely made it behind the door.

I did not give it too much thought at the time that I was asigned the smallest room in the house, although I must say it did bother me to think about it in later years. I suppose being the youngest and smallest in size must have been the reason. The top floor contained another three rooms, and these were reserved for the boarders.

It did not take us long to find several boarders, who not only shared the one bathroom with the family, but had to be provided breakfast and dinner.

In the meantime things were becoming really precarious in Europe. Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia, while Chamberlain gave an assurance of peace. Then in September 1939 the German dictator invaded Poland and this finally, though by no means a straw, broke the camel's back. Less than a month after my parents' safe escape from the grips of tyranny, World War II began.

The normally quiet British people were in a turmoil. There had been no preparation for war so far as none had been expected. Suddenly there was talk of air-raid shelters, black-outs and evacuations.

Every morning I left the house very early in my school uniform for my long train ride to school in Kent. It was not long before all the boarding students were evacuated to Northern England, and the student body diminished to half its original size. Even Mrs. Arregger was making preparations to move to Canada with her three children.

As aliens, we were required to register at the police station nearest our home, and soon a curfew was imposed compelling all aliens to be at their registered address by 9 p.m. any evening and not to leave the house until 6 a.m. Bicycles required a special registration, and I needed a permit to attend my school as no alien was permitted to stray further than 5 miles from his home at any time without special police permission. It certainly curtailed any kind of social life, but then England was growing scared.

Special tribunals were set up for all aliens to determine whether each individual should be interned or allowed the relative freedom of the daylight hours. Within the first two weeks of this new procedure both my father and brother were summoned before such a tribunal. There were two categories: A - meaning instant internment, and B - meaning freedom for the present. Naturally, being refugees from Nazi oppression, both were assigned into the B category.

A week or two later a third category was intiated, namely C - meaning beyond suspicion. The B designation hereafter became a questionable one. It was then recommended for all those having been assigned a B, while there was no better category, to appeal and ask to be switched into the new C category. In his typical easy-going manner, my father decided there was no rush and that he would apply for the change for himself and Ralph in the near future, meanwhile keeping the B designation.

A month or so later it was my mother's turn to appear before the tribunal. I was not eligible since the minimum age for a self-responsible alien was 16 years of age.

"Into which category were your husband and son placed, Mrs. Fischer?" the judge inquired.

"Well, they are both B because at the time of their trial there was nothing better, but they are going to appeal now." "In that case I recommend that you accept the B category also, and then the family can appeal together. Otherwise it will really look suspicious if you are assigned a C as you should, while your husband and son still are B."

Agreeing to this was probably my mother's biggest mistake.

In early 1940 Hitler occupied Holland and Belgium, right after which the British government really became panicky. One morning our doorbell rang at 6:30 a.m. We were all up early, Ralph to get to work, I to catch the train to Kent, and Mutti and Papa to get a warm English breakfast ready for our three boarders. After all, they were sustaining our livelihood.

Two policemen were at the door and demanded to see my father and Ralph. When both appeared in the entrance hall, they informed them that they had instructions to take them to police headquarters.

"Just pack some pajamas and a toothbruch as this may take a while", one of them said in an apologetic tone.

I left for school that morning rather dazed and wondering if we had immigrated to the right country. After all, except for being a great deal more polite, how different was this from the behavior of the SS?

It was the London Times the next morning that told us what was happening. "All male enemy aliens throughout Great Britain interned", proclaimed the headlines. The article proceded in describing that England could no longer take the chance of having its enemy aliens walk about freely, while it was impossible to predict what Hitler's Germany would do next.

Had we not left the latter in order to show our disagreement? How could somebody persecuted by the Nazis possibly be on their side? It was impossible to understand. Noone at my school had ever referred to me as an enemy alien, not even the couple of girls with whom I was constantly competing for the Academic trophy. What possible harm could I, or for that matter the other members of my family, do to this country that had provided a refuge and probably saved us from certain death? Mother and I had sleepless nights thinking ~~such~~puzzling thoughts and waiting for weeks in vain to receive some news from the two men in our family.

It was in mid-May 1940 when once again the doorbell rang very early one morning. I was already dressed in my school uniform, helping ~~mother~~ Mutti to prepare breakfast for the boarders.

"Is your mother in?" one of the two young police women said kindly. It appeared that now it was mother's turn to be marched off to the internment camp.

"What will I do with my daughter? She is only 14 and cannot stay here alone." Mother's voice for once sounded tense.

"Just bring her along. Any children under 16 may accompany their mothers."

In the rush that followed I walked around as if in a dream. ~~Mother~~ Mutti had told me to take off my school uniform, and I quickly changed into a skirt and blouse. In a small suitcase I packed a dress and a couple more skirts and blouses, some underwear and my toilet articles. Judging by the men, it was going to be more than an over-night stay.

"Take only one small suitcase that you can carry, please," one of the police women had instructed.

Mother woke the boarders and told them what was happening. She asked them to vacate the house as soon as they could find other accommodations and to leave the key at the local police station. What a good thing they were sympathetic and honest. They could have stolen us blind. There was not even time to call up my school.

When we got out into the street, we saw to our dismay a paddy-wagon waiting at the curb. What an embarrassment. The neighbors must think we murdered somebody. At least they could have picked us up in a regular car. For the first time I blessed the early hour for the street was deserted.

At the Central Police Station in London bedlam was the order of the day. Hundreds of women were already in the huge assembly hall, some cuddling their babies, others calling out to older children to stay close to them. Young girls, only a couple of years older than myself, stood around the hall crying. They had recently turned 16 and not even been given an opportunity to be classified before a tribunal. As I found out later, many were in England all alone. Most were going to school and living in foster homes. Many had planned to ~~start~~ look for work now that they were of working age, so that they could be independent. Unskilled factory workers were in demand now, and anything would be better than being penniless.

When any ~~of the~~ woman asked to use the restroom, she was accompanied by a police woman who dutifully kept her foot between the door to prevent its being shut. They must have really been told we were criminals, hard-core criminals who would attempt to escape through a bathroom window.

I had never seen so many women together before, young, old, middle-aged, even nuns were part of the prisoner group, whose numbers grew for the remainder of that day. When darkness fell, we were still in the same large assembly hall of the prison where the air was becoming increasingly more foul. After all, how many human beings can one herd together in one room for hours without an open window, and still expect pallatable results. Warm soup in tin cups was passed around at night, and mothers were bedding their

youngsters down in any corner they could find.

~~Mother~~ Mutti and I spread our coats on the floor and tried to relax at laast. In numbed silence we looked at each other. Unless one knew the person, it was not wise to speak to anyone. After all, real Nazis living in England had been interned along with innocent refugees like ourselves.

A tightly locked train took us the next day to Liverpool, and from there a crowded ship crossed over to the Isle of Man. It was fortunate that the crossing did not take too long for our ship had been intended to accommodate one fourth the number of people that it was now holding.

Our destination was Port Erin on the west side of the island. Pre-war it must have been a pretty little seaside resort. Old hotels were lined up along the one main street where vacationers must have strolled in better days. Now there was barbed wire a few feet behind the houses and encircling the ends of the street. Once inside the village, we were left completely to our own devices. We could choose with which other women to share which of the buildings, and the police were rarely seen from now on. Of course we cooked our own meals and took care of cleaning the premises. It was a few days before the real leaders amongst the women emerged and life in our female village became tolerably organized.

Before long, ~~mother~~ Mutti met with some of the nuns in order to set up a school for the children in our internment village. Makeshift classes were arranged for children from 6 to 14 years of age, and various houses in the camp gave up one room each to provide the necessary space. Attendance was strictly voluntary, and two or three age groups would by necessity occupy the same room. At least it provided the school-age occupants of the camp with something useful to do for several hours a day aside from giving them something to think and talk about for the remainder of the day. ~~Mother~~ Mutti was supervising as well as teaching a couple of classes which made her feel really useful again. I was betwixt and between: Just beyond the age level of camp schooling and below the age of being an internee in my own rights.

VII

The world beyond the Isle of Man ~~of~~ was in a turmoil. Of course only scant news reached us now, and that mainly by word of mouth since we were allowed no newspapers or radios.

However, until the day of our internment dramatic news had been published daily and most of it of the worrisome type. Hitler's cruel arm of horror was rapidly extending over most of Europe, while Britain was doing her level best to prepare to defend and protect herself against expected massive air attacks.

Large sub-terranean shelters were rapidly constructed in the basements of large apartment ~~bui~~ and office buildings, and signs were erected indicating its exact location. Every block or so a sign in the streets pointed to the nearest public shelter. Individual homes were provided, cost free, with an Anderson shelter. Of corrugated metal with a roof shaped like an arch, it had a metal door, ~~it had~~ four narrow bunks inside, two upper and two lower, and the entire structure was placed two-thirds below the ground in the garden and as far away from the occupants' house as possible. The air inside was damp and metallic, and we had been happy we had not had to use it so far.

In Germany, in the meantime, Hitler had felt it necessary to completely exterminate the remaining Jews who had been either unable or unwilling to leave Germany. Hope springs eternally, and many of the German Jews had been incapable of believing that anyone could hate so intensely as to attempt to destroy an entire segment of the population. Consequently not enough people had tried hard enough to escape while they could.

More and more concentration camps had sprung up throughout Germany, and the atrocities committed there against innocent people are beyond comprehension. By now no Jew was permitted to leave Germany ~~for~~ and Hitler had decided to ~~rid the world~~ make his 'empire' a pure Aryan one, so that noone would be threatened by the competition of an intelligent hard working Jewish doctor or lawyer once and for all.

Remaining
German Jews were now forced to wear an armband with the Star of David at all times, so that they could be readily identified. This way a Jew could be shoved to the end of a food line with his

already minimal ration book, so that by the time his turn came, there would be no food left to buy. Special park benches were painted yellow "For Jews Only", and they were of course strictly forbidden to sit any place else. In this way, also, anyone tempted to 'fraternize' could be easily identified and immediately persecuted.

Nightly the Gestapo conducted raids to Jewish homes in order to take its occupants to a concentration camp. Here they were further mal-treated and tormented, many to die of starvation or mistreatment, but most having their lives ended in the gas chamber.

The very few lucky Jews with Gentile friends or relatives brave enough to want to help them at the risk of their own lives, were hiding in attics and cellars, and, if they were fortunate enough not to be found, remained there for years till the end of the war.

From what we heard, my mother's youngest sister was taken away first. Her husband, through a lucky chance, had escaped to Shanghai, but their two young daughters near my own age were still at home. The older one, Helga, had had the opportunity to emigrate to England just before the start of the war if she had signed a contract to work as a maid in England for the next five years. It took her several days to decide on such a drastic step, and by the time she had, the war had broken out, and all exits were barred. Now Helga and her younger sister had received their first letter from their mother from the concentration camp. In it my aunt was telling them how lonely she was and how much she missed them.

" Now that your father is out of the country, we three should really not be separated but spend the war years together. Why don't you please come and join me. It would be so nice for all of us to be together again!" she wrote.

How can two teen-age girls left all alone resist such an invitation? They packed their things and left immediately for the address given on the letter. That was the last anyone ever heard or saw of them.

One of my mother's younger brothers lived with his mother, my grandmother, after his divorce. Such an arrangement sounds unusual for nowadays, but my mother's family were all unusually close with each other, and the sharing of the apartment did not in the least hamper my uncle Walter from leading a typical bachelor's life. Of course since the start of the war living had become very restricted for all Jews and particularly those in a large metropolis like Berlin. 'Juden unerwünscht' was the usual sign in most restaurants and other public places, and consequently Jews were now more home-bound than ever before.

My grandmother was the stabilizing force of ~~our~~ her large family, and prior to our emigration all her seven children complete with spouses and their children would assemble regularly every Friday night for dinner in her comfortable apartment. I like to think that I was one of my grandmother's favorites amongst her grandchildren, but I do know that she was always extra special to me. Oma, in spite of her age, thought young. No problem of a ~~young~~ growing girl seemed too unimportant to her, and no thought ever expressed went without consideration. We both loved to chat, and thus we spent many pleasant hours together discussing the immediate and the distant world.

Oma was mentally as alert as ever, even though physically her severe arthritis let her walk only from her bed to the living room armchair, and that only very slowly and painfully and with the help of a walking-cane. I would usually sit on an extra footstool near her chair as I was always small for my age and felt the most relaxed there.

News reached us now in the internment camp on the Isle of Man that even the elderly (Oma was 80 years old by now) were not safe from the Gestapo. They had come in the middle of the night to take my uncle Walter to the concentration camp. Seeing my grandmother there, they decided that they might just as well take her too, so that the apartment would be unoccupied and they could requisition it for one of their officers. After all, it looked like a comfortable place to live.

After loading uncle Walter in the truck, along with other Jews they had already routed out of bed, they ordered Oma to walk down the apartment house stairs. She had not been able to do that for years and mustered all her strength and willpower to comply with their command. When her painful hobble was not fast enough, the Gestapo officer kicked her with his boot, so that she fell down the last few steps. In the truck she died, overcome by the supreme physical effort to become agile again and no doubt the thought of the terror awaiting her at the end of the journey.

To console ourselves, Mutti and I tried to rationalize that it was probably better that way for Oma had been spared witnessing the torture of her son and possibly herself. No matter was rationalization one tried to use, the news was devastating.

Life in the internment camp was now getting organized. It was the closest to communal living I have ever come and ever wish to for that matter. Everyone did help everyone else, and any woman with any kind of trade set up a little business, all of it gratis of course. In the evenings we visited with other inmates sharing the same house, and some of the older girls even taught me to dance.

Some of the guards had let it be known that London was now subject to bombing attacks, and we jokingly told ourselves that we were just evacuated.

Although at least 50 percent of the internees were immigrants like ourselves who could not possibly be suspicious because they fled the Nazi persecution, the other interneed were there for good reason. Some, in fact, tried repeatedly to send signals over to Northern Ireland by means of strong flashlights, but I find it hard to imagine that they could have been too successful.

We knew by now that the men's internment camp was at the opposite side of the island and did receive infrequent and censored mail. About September the most exciting news reached the inhabitants of Port Erin. There was to be a half hour meeting between close relatives of the men's and women's camps. Questionnaires were circulated, and we were asked to fill in the name of a father, husband, ~~son, brother~~ or cousin in the men's camp. Boy, how the families grew. Never have so many women acquired so many cousins in so short a time. Why they allowed cousins but not sons or brothers I never did understand. Well, anyway, we would get to see Papa at least.

At last the meeting day dawned. All the 'eligible' women spent hours getting ready and donned the best of the two or three dresses they had along. After all, it was important to look your very best for a husband one had not seen in about eight months.

A tightly secured train took us to the rendez-vous spot. As it drew into the tiny station, another train approached from the opposite direction. It is impossible to describe the eagerness of the scrubbed, clean shaven faces of the hundreds of middle-aged men leaning out of the windows so far, that I was sure a few were going to topple right out. Very many of them were clutching a bunch of wild flowers quickly plucked along the way. They were just daisies or phlax, some of them holding only one or two stalks, and most of them already drooping from the long, dry train ride, but no two dozen expensive long-stemmed roses had ever looked better. The love and longing that each little leaf expressed could only be understood by the donor and the recipient.

Outside the train station a huge tent had been set up for the meeting, and the inside was partitioned alphabetically so that husbands and wives could find each other by their last name. We hurried to the section marked F, and a frantic search began. After all, the half hour for visiting had begun when we entered the tent, and the longer it took to find one's loved one, the less time one had to be with each other.

My Dad, who had always been so lively and extraverted, with a voice so loud that one had to hold the receiver several inches away from the ear when he called on the telephone, suddenly was very soft-spoken. The excitement of the meeting had overwhelmed him, and his voice sounded raspy and shaky when we finally found each other.

There was so much to say in so little time. We discovered that the men's living conditions were very much worse than ours. Whereäs the women had the whole village with a main and three or four side streets, the men had only one short street with a dozen or so houses cramped close together and barbed wire five feet from the houses. Food was very bad and the possibility of any kind of trade or occupation almost non-existent. One group of young men had already been dispatched to Canada via the 'Andrea Star' which was promptly sunk by torpedo boats and äll aboard löst. Last week they had tried to send Ralph to Australia with a group of young male internees,

but Papa had fainted when he got the news, and they had consequently allowed Ralph to stay with his father.

The half hour was over before we realized it, but the guards made sure noone got an extra minute. The Commandant personally walked around and with his stick separated kissing couples. Back to the separation of the sexes. In Port Erin we lived on the memories of that thirty minutes for months.

It was just a few weeks later when the authorities realized that a second look should be taken at the individual internees. New tribunals were set up, and each person was to appear, bringing his or her own evidence for or against internment. It was publicly acknowledged that Britain had become somewhat nervous when Holland and Belgium were overrun and had interned thousands of aliens, a good percentage of which were refugees from Nazi oppression and could not possibly be of any danger to the country for the simple reason that they were personally opposed to Nazi rule at least as much as any Briton, if not a great deal more.

My father was called before the tribunal already during the first month or so of these new court sessions, and to make quite sure he would be released, he took some extra precautions. He was then in his late ~~50~~ fifties, and a doctor friend, a fellow internee, told him that it surely could not hurt to have a medical reason in addition to the legal and ethical ones for his release. Papa was quite short in stature and a little on the stout side. His fine, short hair was blond, his face rather thin and elongated with blue eyes and a small blond mustache. Like most short men, he was ~~exceptionally extraverted and~~ not only self-assured, but simply knew that he would never be wrong.

Following his friend's advice, he ran up and down the stairs in the house where his sleeping quarters were located several times. When he arrived for the medical examination that preceded the tribunal, his breath was short and rapid and his pulse was fast. He had also just had two or three cups of extra strong coffee. It was no surprise to anyone that he was the first in our family to be released from internment

and returned to our home in London. After all, who wanted to take the responsibility of keeping a man with such high blood pressure.

The blitz was by now in full swing in London, and many a day, dodging the bombs without the comfort of his family near him, I am sure he silently wished he were still safely on the Isle of Man. However, freedom at any price is something he had already learned back in Germany.

My brother, Ralph, at this time decided to do what scores of other young men did - he volunteered for the British Army, not only to get out of the internment camp (and I am sure that played an important part in his consideration), but also to personally fight against the Nazis and help to defeat a group of people that were threatening to dominate the world with terror. It took real willpower to volunteer for the British armed services since, contrary to the U.S. military, aliens were not given equal status in the British services. As a matter of fact, they were only eligible for the Pioneer Corps, a branch of the military that was specifically used to dig trenches. This ruling was later relaxed, and the Pioneers became part of the Infantry, but no alien could become a naturalized citizen for the duration of the war, and this included members of the armed services who had to fight on the Continent with military papers that read "born in Germany".

In December 1940 my mother was finally called before the special tribunal in Port Erin, and of course the judge realized immediately that this woman had no business being interned. He apologized profusely, and we got our freedom papers at last. So on New Year's Eve, December 31st 1940, mother and I were journeying home.

It was a vastly different London that greeted us from the one we had left ~~seven~~ nine months earlier. A complete and utter black-out covered the metropolis, and, other than cars driving with yellow, subdued parking lights, there was not a flicker to be seen in the blackness. It was a shock, to say the least, to see this city which in peace times had

shone like a star with its bright street lights, flickering
dri advertisements, stores and vihicular lights, now like a morgue, very dark and quiet. Trafalgar Square which was once bustling with evening activity, theater and restaurant goers as well as crowds of young couples just window-shopping, now lay quiet in the darkness with an almost eery calm before the storm. Just as we approached the underground station, the quivering shrill sound of the air raid siren pierced the ~~stillness~~. The one or two pedestrians on the street ran toward the subway entrance. No wonder noone dared be outdoors. It was not only the darkness that kept the populace at home, but the fear of being caught en route and without protection from flying glass and debris.

We had apparently reached the safety of the underground just in time but so, it seemed, had thousands of others. The London subway in most places had been built several stories underground and thus was considered the most fool proof airraid shelter in existence. So fool proof was it, that thousands of families had decided to make the various underground stations their nightly home. We were relieved to ~~discover~~ find that there would be one more train before the schedules would be suspended for the night. The reason, I discovered, was that subsequently people would bed down on the tracks since there would no longer be room to accomodate otherwise all the safety seekers.

Tonight being New Year's Eve, it was especially crowded. The war crises not withstanding, many people had obviously decided to celebrate the arrival of the new year in relative safety. If anyone, certainly ~~mother~~ Mutti and I should have had something to celebrate with our new-found freedom, but somehow, witnessing this strange scene, any possible notions of celebration vanished instantly.

Men, women and children were setting up their ~~sleeping~~ nightly facilities on the platform. With younger children sleeping through the din, ~~elder ones~~ lying on one blanket and covered with another, older ones were manipulating noise makers and throwing streamers. Adults, sitting in groups on the floor,

were pouring each other drinks out of thermos bottles. Here and there a group was linking arms and singing 'Old Lang Syne', while grandfathers were smoking pipes and women knitting, keeping an eye on their drowsy children. A few men and women were even dancing to portable phonograph records. and we stood there like strangers in the night in utter amazement. It was almost a relief when the train came, and we rode away from this forced gayety.

IX

After our return home, life and its responsibilities were back to normalcy - if one could call it normalcy, that is, being civilians in the front line of attack. The air raid sirens sounded nightly with such puctuality, that one could almost plan to set one's clocks and watches by it. At 8 p.m. sharp the wailing cry filled the night, and thousands of Londoners prepared to spend the next nine or ten hours in their Anderson shelters in the backyard, the nearest subway station or public shelter in their building or block.

Papa and I had volunteered as Fire Watchers and, as such, had to attend a meeting in the nearest common once a month. We assembled on the first Sunday morning of every month on one of the large lawns of the common along with air raid wardens and fire watchers from the surrounding blocks.

"Man the hoses", a Chief Warden would shout, and with that command we would grab the garden hose we had brought along and crouch on the ground with it. With the next command we would be flat on our bellies, aiming the hose at the nearest tree and shoving our bodies to right or left on the ground according to orders.

A schedule was handed to everyone showing that each volunteer was on duty certain hours of the night two or three nights a week. At such a time the fire watcher had to remain outdoors and scan the skies and houses in his block carefully to watch for fires resulting from the bombing. Any such incident was immediately to be reported to the nearest air raid warden, and then the volunteer was required to help control the fire, at least until the official fire service arrived.

It was so beautiful in Stratham Common this particular Sunday morning, that it was difficult to think about fires and destruction. War had brought the British people out of their conservative shells, and neighbor was talking to neighbor after years of having said no more to each other than 'Nice day, isn't it?'

It was summer time, and the grass was a thick velvety mat of green. There was not much gardening necessary in the public commons as they consisted mainly of lawns and trees, but there was such an ample sufficiency of both, that they appeared almost park-like. There was even a small pond interlaced with a few water-lillies. Some small children were standing at the edge throwing crusts of bread to the ducks who scrambled after each piece as if it were the first thing they had eaten in a month. A group of boys was playing cricket across the common, and a few polite shouts of 'Well tried' were the only audible signs of their game at our end. The trees were heavy with leaves, and the proud, candle-like chestnut blossoms were shining in their white mantle. It really was a nice day today, one of the few called the English summer, and yet it was no wonder ~~a shame~~ that thoughts of bombing and devastation could never completely leave one's mind. After all, we had not been able to undress fully any night since our return to civilization. A dress or suit had to be ready on the chair, just to be slipped on quickly, so that one could run outdoors within a second to escape possible fires or falling debris.

We were having boarders again, not by choice, but by necessity since our only other income now was the dependent's check that Ralph got as an Army Sergeant and the sole supporter of his family. Having boarders made a lot of extra work in the house: the big, warm English breakfast in the morning and a good dinner at night as well as making extra beds and cleaning all the rooms daily. Besides, the good dinner was not so easy. Strict rationing allowed only one egg, 2 ounces of butter, 1/4 lb. sugar and 1 lb. of meat per person per week, that is if everything was available when one stood in line at the various stores. It was Papa's job to go marketing as he was the only

one who had the time to do so. Many times he would 'queue up' for the one egg a week, and when his turn came after thirty or forty-five minutes, there would be none left, and he would be told to return the next day. No British person ever complained when that happened, and certainly noone ever got out of line. Queueing was getting to be a British pasttime, and there was certainly next to nothing during war-time that one could get without it, including such things as buses, newspapers, bread, etc.

It was ~~certainly~~ a real art to bring nourishing meals on the table with rationing the way it was. Such subterfuges as rabbit became a delicacy, and starches like rice and spagetti were important fillers. Actual meat, such as beef or lamb (more often mutton) could be served only on Sunday. This was known as the 'Sunday joint', and it turned that meal into almost a festive occasion.

It was amazing how ~~mother~~ Mutti had got used to all the rough housework, never having had to lift a finger in the home in Germany. Not that she didn't complain. As soon as the two boarders had left for work in the morning, her complaints were frequent and loud and usually became more frequent and more impatient toward the end of the day when she was physically tired and worn out. I certainly could not blame her, even though I am ashamed to admit at this ripe old age that, in typical teen-age fashion, I did not help her nearly as much as I should and could have done. The house was very old, and, like any old place, a chore to keep clean. The old stove alone would have taken me hours to scrub, and the sink looked grey after just having been wiped. The floors throughout the house were wood, and it was perpetually difficult to tell whether they needed sweeping, or whether that was their natural old wood look.

In a family conference right after our home-coming, it had been decided that we could not afford my going back to school. Even though I had had a free place at Stratford House, the income from the boarders and the Army check was so meagre, that legally another wage earner was urgently required. After all,

legally the permissible school leaving age was 14, and I was all of 15 years old by now. Consequently I was enrolled at the Balham and Tooting School of Commerce in order to train for a secretarial job. Realizing the necessity, I did not mind too much, even though it did seem a shame to have missed being able to keep that Best Student Trophy by only one semester and then by default. It was not until a few years later, realizing what a good education means in life, that I silently blamed my father for not making sufficient effort to find work himself, which would have enabled me to complete my education instead of shouldering the responsibility of financially supporting the family at age 16. The realization of what I had missed began to dawn when I found that my close friends from Germany were attending universities simply because their fathers had been willing to adapt themselves to new and difficult circumstances and to lower themselves to do relatively menial work.

Papa had not adjusted too well to life in England, partly no doubt because men are usually somewhat less flexible than women in adjusting to new and different circumstances, and partly because it is not easy to change one's entire life style at age 60. After all, a sapling will bend, but not a gnarled tree. It was strange that mother, only seven years his junior, had adapted so well, not happily but certainly most willingly. Some words by Vera Brittain in the 'Testament of Youth' seem to be appropriate in this connection:

> "....When one has known, one can never be again as one was before one knew. But I suppose it is no use weeping over last year's dead leaves. All the tears in the world cannot make them green again. Perhaps, when it is all over, we shall find that other and better things have taken root in the mould of their dying."

At any rate, I enjoyed Commercial School as I have always enjoyed all learning. Shorthand was a new and intriguing written sign language, and typing to music made even typing the same old ~~meaningless~~ sentences: 'Now is the time for all

good men to come to the aid of the nation.'

I was also studying bookkeeping, economics, Commercial law and French. The other girls in my class seemed to be approximately the same age as I, mostly from lower middle-class families who needed another wage earner. Oddly, they were much easier to make friends with than all the girls from the upper class families at Stratford House. The reason could of course be that I, personally, was now much more sure of myself again, firstly because my English was now perfect, and secondly, because I was once more living with my own family.

During the year that I attended Balham and Tooting School of Commerce, part of a Canadian regiment was stationed nearby, and its soldiers were attending the same School of Commerce, being trained in separate classes in military office procedure. Having attended an all girls school and being in an all female internment camp the past couple of years, I was not too self assured in meeting the opposite sex. During recess between classes the Canadians would watch the girls walk by, and a few of the more brazen ones would strike up conversations. A husky looking fellow had stared at me several days in a row until one day he asked me to play ping-pong with him at lunch time. In the next few weeks our friendship blossomed, and we spent some very pleasant afternoons together after school. Dennis was only 19 years old himself and enjoyed coming over to the house on his day off to participate in a little family life. By the time I graduated from commercial school, his outfit was moved away from London, and I got long, beautifully written letters from an APO address.

The relatively small amount of information they contained about army life was descriptive and interesting, and the remainder of each letter was almost poetic. It could be that it just seemed that way to me since it was the first time I had ever received letters from a boy-friend.

Now, with all kinds of certificates from the Royal Institute of Art in Bookkeeping, Shorthand and Typing, examinations for which had been administered before graduation, I was armed to embark upon the business world at the ripe old age of 16.

Newspapers were scanned for 'Help Wanted' advertisements and the most suitable appearing ones circled. My second interview was in the office of a retail store for ladies' lingery in the West End. For moral support, I suppose, or maybe to help find the different addresses, my Dad had volunteered to come on the subway with me and wait outside each place till my interview was concluded. In this particular case he got to know each piece of underwear displayed in the windows in detail for the meeting with my prospective employer lasted a full hour. He even discovered that Shaftesbury Avenue, although part of the theater district in London, was also a street where girls plied the oldest trade in the world. It was mid-morning and thus not exactly the heighth of business hours for these 'ladies', but apparently this trade is in demand almost at any hour.

Meantime I had been ushered upstairs to the third floor above the retail store to see the Manageress of office personnel.

"I am answering your advertisement for a stenographer."
"How old are you?"

"16".

"I take it you have no previous experience then?"

"No, but I have certificates from the Royal Institute of Arts."

"This job would be mainly for the Managing Direxctor, and has a great deal of dictation. What is your shorthand speed?"

"120 words per minute."

After scrutinizing my diplomas and a test to verify their accuracy, I was taken back downstairs to the main floor of the store and shown into the office of the owner-manager. Mr. Greenbury welcomed me with a warm smile and a few encouraging words. He was of medium height and seemed to be a snappy dresser. His skin was milk white, interspersed with freckles,

accentuated by a shock of fire-red hair and cat-green eyes.

"Tell me about your life, Miss Fischer," he began re-assuringly.

Noone had ever called me 'Miss Fischer' before, and I suddenly felt so adult, I had trouble concentrating on the answer. How could he possibly be that interested in the story of my life, anyway? I talked and talked, and he obviously seemed fascinated. I was not even nervous, when he gave me a shorthand test. I had been in his office so long, I was beginning to feel quite at home.

"How would £3 a week suit you?"

"Fine. Just fine."

I was ecstatic. Was it that easy to get a job when the newspaper said every day that there were not enough jobs to go around? I sort of danced out through the shop between the underwear counters and felt as though I had just been hired as Managing Director.

"My, you couln't have stayed a little longer. I was beginning to worry what he was doing to you in there. I already know the price of every pair of underpants in the window, and the prostitutes across the street are beginning to give me the eye." Papa sounded impatient but relieved.

A new era was beginning. As of the next Monday I was part of the British working force. All of 16 years old, I worked 44 hours a week, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and Saturdays till 1 o'clock. It was a tiny office I shared with Margaret, the shipping clerk. She received all the deliveries and dispatched the orders while also servicing the switchboard. I was busy typing most of the day for Mr. Greenbury was a full-time dictator. When he was not dictating the many business letters he needed to send, it would be time to write to his son, who had been sent to the U.S. to learn the garment trade, and maybe also not to have to go into the British Army while the war was at its thickest.

These letters would be on the average eight to ten pages long and describing every activity and happening of the past few days. I thus became intimately acquainted with Mr. Greenbury's home life. Geoffrey, the son, was about to marry an American girl and was getting his management training at Macy's in New York.

In the meantime the bombing of London continued. The sirens still went off punctually at 8 p.m. each evening. When it was time to go to bed, Mutti and the two boarders usually retired to the Anderson shelter in the garden, while Papa and I bedded down under the big dining-room table. It was still out of the question to get fully undressed or to risk being caught in an upstairs bedroom when the bombs fell. After all, it was quicker to rush out from the main floor or even to crawl out from under the debris rather than risk crashing down a whole floor.

Isn't it wonderful how soundly youth can sleep? After the first couple of weeks of getting used to the constant anti-aircraft fire plus the explosion of the bombs, I slept through most of it as soundly as a baby. Being older and more continually concerned about the ubiquitous dangers, Papa would be considerably more alert. As the bombs came nearer, his call to arms would be "Titel, the pillow!" as I automatically grabbed the pillow under my face and pulled it over my head. The table seemed an able protection too as repeatedly pieces of flying glass or wood coming through the window would crash on the table, leave a deep mark but halt there.

It was the summer of 1943 that both the boarders were gone one night, visiting with their families in Liverpool and Manchester. Mutti would not sleep in the Anderson shelter alone but was too uneasy to sleep in the house with us. Anyway, in the shelter she had a bunk, and even with a mattress on the floor it got pretty hard and uncomfortable on the dining-room floor if you were not used to it like we were. So I agreed to sleep in the shelter with Mutti while Papa, who refused to spend any time in the shelter, bedded down under the table in the house a usual

It was the time of the V-2 bombs, the kind that made no sound in falling, and only when they had hit their target did one hear the explosion of the attacked object. Some people felt more uneasy because of the noiselessness, and no doubt that was part of the German strategy, but we almost preferred these bombs to the incendiary kind that had produced a loud hurling sound as they descended and thus made people shudder in anticipated disaster and anxiety. By the time the V-2 crash was heard, it had already hit its mark, and anyone hearing the sound knew they had been spared once again. As much as the war had brought people together, it had also made them selfish. One's own survival and that of one's loved ones was all that mattered in the last analysis for there was not enough time or energy left to worry about everyone else.

I was in my deepest sleep that night in the shelter, when suddenly I was awakened by something that could only be likened to a severe earthquake. The ground beneath us and the metal hood of the shelter were trembling violently; streaks of fire were flashing in front of my eyes; glass was crashing and timber seemed to be flying through the air. Surely this time it was us, and the house must have collapsed with Papa in it. We should have made him come into the shelter with us.

To open the heavy shelter door was quite a feast, but sheer hysterical anxiety gave us the strength of a hercules. The grass was covered several inches deep with broken glass, wood splinters, metal and other debris. Cutting holes into our shoes and in the pitch dark, we shoved our way towards the house, in stunned silence.

"Papa is alive!"

It was Mutti who let out the first cry of relief for a light was brightening the darkness from the dining room. Normally, no lights from any windows were allowed to be visible from the street or anywhere outside as the black-out regulations were strict. All windows had darkened shades; there were no street lights in all of London, and the car lights had to be dimmed to parking lights.

With this blast, however, all the windows in the house had been blown out and with it of course the shades. Most doors, too, had been ripped from their hinges, and the house looked frightening with ghost-like holes where doors and windows once had been. Papa was calmly sweeping up the debris and huge chunks of plaster that had fallen out of the walls and ceilings. While we were struggling out of the shelter, he had already determined that the bomb had been a direct hit three houses down the street and that everyone there had been killed. How much closer could it possibly come?

The light from the dining room was visible because all remaining windows in the house had been broken by the blast and of course the black-out curtain torn away. After the damage was surveyed, we turned out the light instantly as otherwise the police and whole neighborhood would have descended upon us in minutes, chiding us for attracting the enemy bombers. By the light of a flashlight we picked up the fallen pieces of furniture, lamps, etc. as well as the worst pieces of glass. There was not even an ambulance visible outside to attend to the dead in the neighboring house that had received the direct hit. Rescue squads were busy all over London, and there were never enough to go around to attend to the victims right away. Neighbors just had to help each other until official help arrived.

We sure had been lucky once more. How long could this go on?

Living in the south-west of London, we were right in the path of the air route from Germany to the center of the city. Hence, whenever the anti-aircraft fire or the defending fighter planes were too active, the Germans would unload their deadly cargoes before they reached the center of the metropolis. What must it be like to press that button and know the charge will kill numberless innocent civilians? What kind of a war was this anyway where the home-front was in almost greater danger than the soldiers in the front lines? Was it patriotism or animalistic sadism that was brought out in humans when they felt compelled to kill other human beings?

Going to work one morning, I really had cause to reflect on fate or whatever it was that determines when a person's life is to come to an end, It was the time of the buzz-bombs, the ones that, contrary to the V-2s, made a loud buzzing noise as they whizzed through the air towards their target.

The bus was crowded with commuters, and long before the Balham High Street stop, all the seats had been filled. I stood wedged in between a couple of workmen with their metal lunch-pails. The one clutching the leather strap directly above my upstretched arm had a freshly laundered grey shirt on, open at the neck and cotton slacks of about the same color. Both may have been blue once, but repeated washing and ironing had gradually taken the color and brightness out of them. The bus crawled along through the thick rush-hour traffic, and just as the conductor called out "Clapham Common!" that all too familiar buzz was audible. It grew louder and louder, like a gigantic motor racing unmistakably in our direction. As I realized the significance of the sound, I grew mezmerized and could not move. I wanted to scream with fright, but no sound came, and every muscle seemed paralized.

The next thing I remember was a gruff cockney male voice shouting "Duck, mate!" My head was grabbed and pushed forcibly under the nearest seat. When I realized what had happened, I found myself flat on the floor of the bus, the workman crouching next to me, and two or three other people jumbled across us, arms and legs in every direction. All around us glass, metal, strips of leather and plastic, ripped seats, coins, tickets and blood. Several people who had not had a 'mate' to push them down fast enough, had been cut and injured severely by the flying glass. But again fate had not meant for my life to be ended as yet.

The actual bomb had landed only about 50 feet from the bus, but what a stroke of luck that about 20 feet from the street the common started. That meant that the bomb had dug a deep crater into the grass and thus buried itself. There had been nothing for it to bounce off and explode the surrounding area. The passengers able to walk disentangled themselves from the debris, rushed across the street away from the smouldering crater and crouched in the nearest doorway for the

next twenty minutes. Nothing happened. So the bomb had apparently killed itself.

Dazed, and understandably shaken, I walked slowly from the scene. The injured were being picked up by several ambulances, but I told them I was alright, and, seeing just scratches and black and blue marks on me, they had no time to question me further. I walked to a quieter edge of the common and sat on the grass. I must have sat there for an hour or more with my young life flashing before my eyes. My God, I had not even thanked the workman for saving me. How close I had come to being killed once again.

Life through the war years gave the British people a common purpose and goal. To defeat the Nazi tirant was more important than ~~calmness of~~ jittery nerves, stomachs growling from hunger, controlled employment and moreover to never know whether one or one's loved ones would be alive by the end of the day or night."

With the entrance of the United States into the war in 1941 the tide had turned gradually on the military fronts. Great Britain was no longer depleting all her stregths in fighting the Axis powers alone. If Hitler had only known how ill prepared England had been at the start of the war militarily as well as at home, he surely could have had the German navy and air force sink the British isles. By now, however, Great Britain was united and strong as well as organized, and certainly morally the will of the people could never have been broken. There is no doubt that Winston Churchhill was one of the main contributors to this strength of will. His radio talks to the nation were dynamic and gripping in that powerful, chosen rhetoric of his that stirred the innermost feelings of even the most non-chalant person.

Long letters were arriving from Dennis describing the war scene in a beautiful, artistic handwriting. They were full of longing for a return to normalcy, but also of pride in the effort the volunteer Canadians were making to help defeat the dreaded enemy. From a secure office job he had volunteered for the Paratroopers and thus been amongst the first to land at Dunkirk and other important battlefields. Dennis was my personal war effort, and I sent him food packages that deprived me of the already tiny amounts allocated to each person ar the few ersatz goods that could fill our stomachs during the lonely evenings of the Blitz, during which one never left one's home. Not only was the black-out so complete,

that noone voluntarily ventured on the pitch black streets, but also for aliens there was still a curfew in existence. Non-British residents had to be inside their homes between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., and no alien was permitted more than 5 miles outside the city limits where he or she was registered. That meant special permits for any kind of excursion, of which there were darn few.

Margaret, at the office, had a boy-friend in the Army, and, while we ate our sandwiches at lunch time, we would read each other the letters from our 'veterans'. Her friend was a neighbor's son, and as time passed, his letters to Margaret became rather personal. She continued reading them to me nonetheless, the main reason being that she needed my help in answering them. Being a shipping clerk, Margaret felt (even though she was two years older than I) that she could not express herself too well in writing. Consequently she would tell me what she wanted to write him, and I would type up the draft of the letter for her. It probably was not an ethical thing to do, but it was fun, and I felt as though I was living somebody else's life. The best part was when the reply came, saying what a beautiful letter Margaret had written and how much more deeply he was falling in love with her every day. When the boy came home at war's end to marry Margaret, I almost felt as though I should be an invisible princess with a magic wand at the wedding. Besides, why couldn't Cyrano de Bergerac be a woman?

My own romance was not nearly as successful. Dennis' letters were beautiful, but I felt that I really did not know the ~~boy~~ young man too well. In 1944 he was to get his first furlough to London and was joyfully informing me of the dates. Being of conservative German stock, it never occurred to me that he might have no place to stay in London. After all, it was unheard of to ask a boy you hardly knew to stay in your house. How times have changed. In this new age of permissiveness it would certainly be the odd man (girl) out who would not extend such an invitation. Anyway, I wrote Dennis I was looking forward

to seeing him, and would he please let me know when he gets into town. That did it, and I never heard from him again. I suppose Canadian ethics must have been more avant guarde even in those days.

XI

Promptly on my 18th birthday I had received the usual letter from the British armed services telling me that I was to report for active duty. British girls were not called till they were 20 years old, but aliens, even though it was impossible to be naturalized during the war years, were inducted at 18. Somewhat alarmed, I showed the letter to Mr. G. (as my boss, Mr. Greenbury, was generally called), alarmed not because I was not eager to do my bit for the war effort, but because my meagre salary was the sole support of my family other than the small family allowance Rolf got as a Sargeant in the army and the little that was left over after feeding the boarders.

Mr. G. had an instant solution. The 'Pay-as-You-Go' income tax system had just been instituted, and it was so complicated and at the same time so important to the nation that needed every available penny, that any employee handling the income tax of a company was immediately exempt from national service. Mr. G. and the accountant sat down with me that day and the next five days and evenings following to teach me the income tax calculations for the employees. My additional duties now were to do the necessary bookkeeping for the employees' wages and income tax each week, and a letter to that effect was sent to the Selective Service.

I thoroughly enjoyed my new duties for they were an interesting change from dictation and correspondence. By now I was quick at working with pounds, shillings and pence. Besides, it raised my own wages to £4.10.0. which was not to be sneezed at. All salaries were paid in cash, and each week, after calculating the deductions, I would work out

exactly how many half crowns, shillings, six penny pieces, three-penny coins and pence I would need for each wage envelope before going to the bank with the guard and bringing back the correct number of ~~bank~~ pound notes and coins. ~~I~~ These would be counted out into the exact amounts for each employee and ~~put~~ placed into an envelope that had to be marked with all the deductions.

There was another activity that kept me out of the draft. Since duty in the armed services was compulsary for young people of both sexes, a training corps had been formed which enabled its members to be eligible for speedy advancement in the three branches of the regular services. There was enough German blood in me to make the Girls' Training Corps appear enticing. Besides, it was a psychological must to contribute one's part to the war effort. With their long history of democracy, Britain unfortunately was not at all democratic or even fair in its treatment of alien residents. It was understandable that no ordinary civilian could be naturalized during the war years, but even soldiers spending months at a time at the front lines in British uniform, were still legally aliens. Had ~~Ralph~~ had the misfortune to be captured, he could have been instantly beheaded by the Germans. Even though Hitler had deprived the Jews of their citizenship, in a case of taking up arms against Germany, his edict would have been instantly reversed.

Women of course were not sent to the front lines, but female aliens, although called to active duty two years before their British counterparts, were only eligible for domestic chores in the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) and could not even enter the air or navy branches. Perhaps that was why I was particularly ambitious when joining the GTC. Although very British in accent and feeling, I was bothered mainly by the extreme caste system that still seemed to exist in England. Where else would a secretary be told by her boss that it was not a good idea for her to eat lunch

with the retail sales girls? Or where else would the boss' wife be required to be ~~called~~ addressed as "Madam" by all the employees? The old school tie was still the reigning monarch in Great Britain, and, unless the right tie could be exhibited to the right people, access into even the upper middleclass strata was impossible. The average American has no idea how fortunate he is to have the freedom of choice, education and development. Anyone with the desire and ambition in the United States can live up to his full potential. Not so in England. State education during the '40s was decidedly inferior to the private schools, and the latter were so expensive that they were not within the reach of the average wage earner. Since universities accepted only students with a certain prep school background, who incidentally were the only ones who could pass the A level exams required satisfactorily, a college education and thus a profession were virtually unobtainable for the middle class British citizen.

Even dialect separated the various ~~streams~~ segments of British life, and any 'arry who 'ung 'is 'anger in the 'all, was instantly inferior to an Oxford accented bowler hat clad gentleman the minute he opened his mouth.

Having discovered this early and of course gone to the correct private school, I cultivated the Oxford accent and must say with rather profound success. This, as well as general alertness and eagerness, no doubt were partly to blame for my being recommended for Officers' Training School within six months of joining the GTC. The Corps met every week-end, and it provided that needed extra carricular activity that had been missing from the drab war days. Social life was almost non-existent, partly due to the curfew and black-out and partly to the fact that we lived in South-west London, the opposite direction from where most of the other German refugees lived. Since the right segments of society, in which I would have matured under normal circum-stances, were not accepting foreigners in Britain, the

young refugees formed their own clubs and social groups. The trip from Balham to Hampstead, however, was too long on the underground to be able to get home in time for the curfew and still make the evening worth-while. So training in the GTC took the place of social life at an age when most girls in the United States think of little other than dating.

The drilling was a good physical outlet, and the Officers' Training Course provided training in leadership and decision-making. In 1943 I graduated as a Second Lieutenant and thoroughly enjoyed guiding a group of girls my own age. There were lots of discussion groups on war-related subjects and, not to appear an outsider, I even took my unit to church on Sunday mornings. By 1944 I was a First Lieutenant and proud of my contribution to the war effort.

The bombing continued nightly, and even ~~the~~ in the daytime there was no escaping the Blitz. The British people were incredibly patient in accepting the hardships of war, the nightly air-raids, the complete black-out, the tiny food rations and the strict control of war-related jobs. Most families saved their combined weekly meat rations for the Sunday "joint" and the rest of the week existed on rabbits, spaghetti and maccaroni and rice dishes to fill protein-starved stomachs. Never a complaint could be heard anywhere. Patient commuters stood in orderly "queues" to await their bus or even the purchase of a newspaper, not to mention the ubiquitous queues in food stores. After a long night of bombing and casualties, one house-owner would say to his neighbor (whom in pre war days he had not spoken to at all) "Want a cup o' tea, ducks?"

The vast majority of London houses were built in a grey or red monotone brick, usually two houses attached by a common wall. Three or four feet of front lawn were enclosed by shrubs and a short black fence. Two or three steps leading to the front door were topped by a copper facing. Due to

the ever present moisture in the air, this copper strip had to be polished at least every other day so as not to appear neglected, and it was not uncommon to see housewives on their hands and knees in the morning hours, polishing their front door step. The front room was usually called the parlor and rarely used except for company, whereas the living-room in the rear was the focal point for most families.

The houses, usually two or three stories high and rather narrow, with a steep roof, looked so identical in their brick construction, that if it were not for varying trees in different streets, it was difficult to tell many a street apart. Street signs could not be read in the blackout, and during a rain storm, coming home from work one winter evening, I took the wrong turn from the High Street. It was not until I put my key into the door, trying unsuccessfully to open it, and a strange lady appeared in shocked surprise, that I realized I was in the wrong street. Luckily our house was the last in the block, so that when I stumbled down the curb on foggy nights, I knew I had to take a few steps backward to reach the right house.

German people, from what we read, could not take as much on the chin as the British, particularly now that German victories were few and far in between. It was 1945, and Hitler's strategic plans were not working according to schedule any more. The German army was on the retreat on the Eastern front, and American troops were moving fast toward Paris and then even Berlin.

The nightly bombing of London was as regular and terrifying as ever, but now everyone knew it was achieved with a last desparate breath for the bombing of Berlin was even more concentrated and furious, and the Berliners did not have the stamina or experience of the Londoners to hold out.

In May of 1945 the American troops reached Berlin, and, in a grandiose gesture of friendship, allowed their Russian allies to occupy part of the city. On May 6th the German forces declared themselves defeated, and it was reported that Hitler shot himself together with Eva Braun in his bunker.

Even though Japan was still a formidable enemy not to be dismissed lightly, the end of European hostilities for Britain meant the end of bombing and the daily fear for one's life. For once the British population went completely berserk. Everyone crowded the streets. In the City and West End beer and other drinks were passed freely. Guitars, trumpets and even piano were played on the sidewalks, and everyone was singing, dancing and shouting. Young men climbed lamp posts and waved British flags, and anyone in uniform felt free to grab the nearest young girl and kiss her ardently. It surely must have been the wildest celebration of a whole populace in history and with good reason. To have that yoke of constant danger suddenly lifted was a condition every Briton had prayed for for the past four years.

That afternoon Churchill appeared on the balcony of 10 Downing Street, and the cheers that greeted the stocky figure were almost impossible to subdue. At last he was able to make his speech, and his deep deliberate voice droned through the streets of London. Papa and I were wedged in amongst the crowds on Trafalgar Square, and there was not a dry eye within miles.

The truly finest hour of Britons had finally come, and so had the end of the fifth episode of my life, one which had been returned to me twice in two near-misses during the bombing.

XII

Life in post-war England was not the easiest. First of all, the war in Asia was still in full swing, and secondly Britain had neither the strength nor the manpower, and certainly not the funds, to rebuild a shattered country very quickly. Large numbers of British boys were still fighting at the other end of the world, and large numbers of course had been killed. For years rubble from bomb damage remained in the streets, and much needed housing was not rebuilt. Consequently there was a dearth of living quarters in urban cities which did not exactly help to raise the living standard of the British people. Food, too, remained scarce for a long while and ration coupons were maintained with many staple items just not available on the market shelves. Britons were so used to tightening their belts, and so stoic in their approach to life, that noone was ever heard to complain.

Jobs continued to be controlled, i.e. any new applicant was compelled to go through the Labor Department in seeking or accepting new employment, and this department had to give its permission, which depended upon the urgency and importance of the particular job to the nation. That of course meant no change in employment for me in the forseeable future.

Social life was still at a low ebb as far as I was concerned for my opportunity to meet new people was most limited. At work I was not permitted to associate with the "shop girls", and the friends of my parents were quite old, few in number and with next to no offspring within the London area. Once in a while I had gone to public dances with a girl-friend, but the kind of acquaintances one made there were not to my liking, and so that type of outing was short-lived.

I did hear of a social gathering at the Stratham Temple one day, and reluctantly I went. In hindsight, it was probably the turning-point of my life for, as frequently happens in life, one thing led to another.

The Temple Social Committee had asked the American unit of Eisenhower's forces stationed nearby to send over any Jewish soldiers who might like to spend a social afternoon with British people. Two were all that had responded: A Warrant Officer of medium height, somewhat stocky with a pleasant face and a jolly demeanor came with a tall, curly haired sergeant whose name was Ira. It wasn't long before I made both their acquaintance, and the three of us were in animated conversation. The afternoon went by too fast, and I suddenly realized how much (at age 18) I enjoyed the company of intelligent young men.

"Bob can use the officers' mess hall and can invite guests. How about joining us both for dinner on Friday?" It was Ira speaking.

"Oh, I'd love to. Tell me where and at what time."

At the dinner that night Bob seemed to be a very fast eater and excused himself as soon as he was through. Ira and I linguered over our coffee and then took an extended walk through the darkened city streets. We had both enjoyed each other's company immensely, and Ira broke the bombshell gently.

"Anne, I would love to see you again Sunday, but I want you to know that I am married. I won't say that I am madly in love with my wife, but I won't say anything else either. I do enjoy being with you, and surely there is no harm in that. Please say that you'll see me on Sundays, and of course you are perfectly free to go out with other boys during the week. Surely that way we are not hurting anybody."

He was right. What harm was there in seeing a fellow strictly on a platonic level? He was a ~~druggist~~ pharmacist in private life and was interesting and fun to be with. Besides, I craved the company of young people with whom I could discuss the past, the present and the future and who could introduce a little lightheartedness into my life.

I had met Ira in the spring of 1945 when my life decidedly needed cheering. With only slight reservations I accepted the date for Sunday. And what a Sunday it was - the beginning of many Sundays, to which I would look forward all week. We would take the train out to Hampton Court and enjoy its historical museum plus a picnic amongst its magnificant flowers. Or, weather permitting, we would take a row boat down the Thames and watch the conglomeration of people sauntering along its shores. There were art galleries to go to and band concerts in Hyde Park to attend. Without spending any money to speak of, we had the most wonderful Sundays together and never tired of talking to each other. It was the best of times; it was the worst of times, for as I grew fonder and fonder of Ira and more dependent on seeing him, I began to ask myself what I was getting myself into.

It was obvious that Ira, too, was becoming more and more attracted to me, and no longer did he urge me to see other boys during the week, a thing that I had never been capable of doing anyway. A warm and lingueri ng kiss or two when we said good-night now until the following Sunday was part of seeing each other and a part, no doubt, we both looked forward to. First no satisfactory social life and then this. What was I going to do?

My dilemma was solved one day by reading the paper. On about the 10th page I saw this advertisement by the U.S. Armed Forces. "Seeking translators and interpreters with complete and perfect knowledge of both German and English", it said. "Positions available for the Civil Censorship on the Continent as Allied Civilian Employees with the U.S. War Department. Good pay which is tax-free if earned outside of the United Kingdom. Apply for interviews now, Grosvenor Square....." What a wonderful idea. My German was still fluent, and so was my English. It sounded like an interesting job, a possibility of finding a course

out what happened to our lost relatives in Germany and a sure way to escape Ira without being tempted to see him again.

During my lunch hour the next day, without mentioning anything to my parents, I went to Grosvenor Square. Being under 21, I had not been able to become a British citizen on my own yet, and since I was also just over 18, I could not be naturalized with my parents who had applied for citizenship as soon as they were allowed to do so when the war was over. Consequently, my first concern was ' will I be able to return to the United Kingdom from the Continent once my contract with the U.S. War Department expires? All I had was a piece of paper given to me at the time of the childrens' transport, declaring that I was "stateless" since Hitler had deprived all Jews of their German citizenship.

"I am sorry, but so far we have no assurance from the British government that you may be able to return." This from the American lieutenant who answered my questions.

"Maybe when the war in Asia is over. we can give a guaranty. Come and see us again then."

Well, it sounded good while it lasted, but I wouldn't give up. I cut the advertisement out of the paper and tucked it in my dresser drawer.

In the meantime I had to stop seeing Ira. It wasn't easy. I lay awake at night, working out word for word what I was going to tell him. After all, Ira had always said, whenever I wanted to call it quits, he wouldn't make a fuss. Nevertheless I worried about it the major part of the week before our Sunday date.

He noticed immediately there was something wrong for it was impossible for me to act relaxed.

"Did I do something to upset you?" He seemed genuinely concerned.

Ignoring the question, I plunged right in.

"Ira, this is very difficult to tell you, but I must. I have begun to grow entirely too fond of you, and under the circumstances.....well, I must put a halt to things before they get out of hand. What I am trying to say is that afteer today I am afraid I cannot see you any more."

A very long silence followed as we walked, a few inches apart, across the Tooting Beck Common. It was Ira who finally broke the stillness with a hesitant voice.

"Of course I have known this had to come one of these days, and frankly, I have dreaded it. Somehow I had kidded myself that we could go on like this for a long, long time, but life doesn't work miracles. I want you to know that I shall never forget these Sundays we had together."

It was a sad, sad farewell and all I could do not to say hundred times "I have changed my mind, truly I have changed my mind." Luckily, though not emotionally, some hitherto undiscovered common sense helped me stick to my guns.

The next few weeks were lonely and desparate, but world events were happening so swiftly, that there suddenly seemed hope for a better world on the horizon. Soon my brother would return to civilian life after five years in the British Army and, still not being naturalized, would once more have to register as an alien again. But it should speed up his naturalization eventually, and my parents too had applied for citizenship. Noone had been allowed to be naturalized during the war, but now the applications were pouring in.

XIII

In 1945
~~On~~ August ~~16, 1945, the war with Japan was finally over~~ America dropped the dreaded atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and thus finally, in fear of having their small country devastated, Japan ~~fi~~ surrendered. VJ Day could not approach the celebrations of VE Day. After all, there had been no bomb threat from Japan, and that country was far off in another world. Nonetheless, the relief of peace after six hard years of war and suffering was a sigh that was audible throughout Britain.

Food remained rationed and many items scarce, and jobs were still strictly regulated by the Labor Department. But Britons had made it through their most trying hours, and the job of rebuilding would be easy in comparison.

The week after VJ Day I obtained a new appointment at the American employment office for Allied Civilian Employees at the U.S. Military Headquarters in Grosvenor Square. And this time I got a promise in writing that, at the end of my contract with them, my re-entry into the United Kingdom would be assured. So eager were they for German speaking personnel for the Civil Censorship Division, that I was immediately ushered in for an interview with the young captain in charge of hiring. Apparently my German was good, and the interviewer made the job sound most enticing. The contract was to be for a year as a civilian employee in Germany with the U.S. Armed Forces. Civilian clothes, however, were not permitted, and our uniform was to be that of an American officer with no visible rank but with all the status and privileges of an commissioned officer.

I will say, the U.S. military certainly did not procrastinate. Within a few days I was given a physical examination plus inocculations against every imaginable and unimaginable disease.

My parents were surprisingly understanding when I finally told them that I had "enlisted" in the U.S. Army as a civilian employee but were somewhat shocked to hear that I was already to leave in two weeks. In the intervening time I made several trips to Grosvenor Square for repeated interviews, language examinations, signing of papers, etc. The day I had picked up my uniform I was just emerging from the underground in the West End when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Ira rushing by. I stopped and held my breath. "Don't move, don't look", I told myself. It took all my willpower not to call out or run after him. Luckily he turned the corner without seeing me, and I went home visibly shaken. What a blessing I was leaving the next week.

The train leaving Victoria Station on September 16, 1945, was filled with young men and women in khaki officers uniform like myself. Were they all running away from something? Or were they looking for a little adventure in their lives? Both were true in my case. One of the young women in my railway compartment started a conversation, and before long we were so engrossed in exchanging information about ourselves that I felt like we had known each other for years. It appeared that Bergit did have deeper reasons for joining the Civil Censorship Division. She was half-Jewish and her mother, being Protestant, had survived the war years in Frankfurt. Naturally Bergit was anxious to be stationed somewhere in the vicinity of this German city, so that she could be reunited with her mother, if only temporarily. But this was not to be for the moment.

The entire group of ~~young-people~~ Allied Civilian Employees or ACE's, as we came to be called, were destined for a training camp near Paris. We were housed dormitory-style, and each morning we reported to classes where we were taught various military administrative duties. Bergit and I were in the same group and quickly became buddy-buddies. Most

of our classes were taught by Sgt. Bill Perry, and easy-going stocky young man who seemed to enjoy his work. Two or three weeks after our arrival Sgt. Perry asked me for a date, and I accepted - more to get out of our camp at night than for any particular attraction to Bill. Our outings to Paris were pleasant enough, but I had to force myself not to think about Ira - a condition that was exaccerbated by a letter from my mother telling me that Ira had called several times asking for my exact address in France.

Now the first group of ACEs was assigned to a permanent location in Germany, namely Stuttgart. My name was not amongst them, and I discovered later that Bill Perry had asked for me to stay on in France as long as possible. Since I did not have any particular preference in Germany, I did not object to staying on, and anyway Bergit had begged me to try and get into a group with her that would be sent to Frankfurt. Since the latter was the U.S. headquarters in Germany, some of us were bound to be assigned there sooner or later.

One morning I awoke on my straw mattress itching all over. I lifted my pajama tops and looked at myself. It was all I could do not to let out a cry of horror and wake all the other girls for I was covered in big red pimples, especially around my waist. 'Could I have the measles?' I reported to sick bay immediately and in a short while was ushered in to the office of the Captain who was one of our doctors. "I am afraid you have scabies", he said after looking at my red body carefully. "I will give you some medication, and please try not to scratch yourself." "How does one get scabies?" I said to Bergit that night. "I think you are supposed to catch it from sexual intercourse", she informed me importantly. "But I haven't had any intercourse, even though I bet nobody would believe me", I intoned sadly. I never did discover where Bergit got her medical knowledge, but I do know that I have seldom been so embarrassed. In hindsight insects from the straw mattress

might have been a more sure culprit. Luckily it was not a terribly long lasting malaise, but I did try to conceal it from all and sundry as much as possible.

In November 1945 there was an announcement that 20 of our remaining group would be sent to Offenbach, a suburb of Frankfurt for our permanent assignment. Sgt. Perry called me into his office and told me that he had arranged for me to be interviewed by the Captain in charge of IRD (Information and Research Division), the third and final stage of the Civil Censorship Division in each location. The other three were Postal, Electrical and Travel Division. In Postal ACEs read exerpts of German mail and censored same, and in Elec- they scrutinized telegrams and listened to telephone conversations of German citizens. In Travel they searched travellers for mail they might be carrying to avoid censorship. None of those three sounded too enticing to me. So I was delighted with Bill's referral. One other girl had been sent to be interviewed by Capt. Goldsmith, so as to have fair competition and also to give the Captain a choice of secretaries. When my interview took place on the second day after our arrival in Offenbach, Capt. Goldsmith had already talked to my competitor, but, lucky for me, decided to hire me. When I heard that Bill Perry had sent along a special reference, I realized that it wasn't just due to the way I came across that afternoon.

I shared a spacious office with my new boss and soon acknowledged to myself that this was the beginning of a most enjoyable job. High brass came and went, and I was privvy to some most interesting military discussions. Aside from the routine secretarial work, I handled private translations, channeled lots of classified documents and generally helped oversee the department which included a large typing pool, a records division and a translation department. After all, IRD was the division to whom the suspicious censored material from the other three divisions was sent, and it was there that we decided which other military division of Intelligence would be interested in the information gleaned.

Our billets in Offenbach were a group of apartment houses which had been taken over from German citizens shortly before our arrival. The latter had been allowed only to take their personal belongings such as clothes, radios, etc. but had had to leave all furniture and appliances behind. Bergit and I had been assigned to a 3 bedroom apartment that also included a living room and a kitchen. Since we took all our meals in the mess hall, the latter was not used to a great extent. Bergit and I shared the main bedroom, and Ashky and Monica each had one of the smaller rooms. Ashky I had actually met in the internment camp on the Isle of Man already. Whereas I was only 14 at the time and came as a "dependent", Ashky was one of those unfortunate 16 year olds who had not yet had a chance to be classified before a tribunal since their 16th birthday. Little did we expect to meet again in the U.S. Civil Censorship.

Monica was the daughter of a German Buergermeister (mayor) from Mosbach, a small town near Heidelberg. Her family had been decidedly anti-Nazi, and Monica had opted to go to England, more for adventure and future opportunities than for definite political reasons. During our stay in Offenbach she invited me to her home in Mosbach countless weekends, and I was always made extremely welcome there.

'The Four Aces' we called ourselves (short for Allied Civilian Employee) and affixed a sign to that effect on our front door. Each Sunday we would go into Frankfurt to attend concerts, dances, etc., and of course Bergit had long been happily reunited with her mother who invited me many a Sunday for a visit, but never for a meal since the Germans did not have enough to eat for themselves, and then only the bare essentials such as potatoes. The four ACEs would save all extra apples, rolls, etc. from the mess hall and collect them for Bergit to give to her mother on her next visit.

Germans, too, were employed by the Civil Censorship, but they had to get a special clearance and then pass through extra security gates that opened to our compound which was enclosed by barbed wire. It must have been strange for these

German civilians to spy on their compatriots' mail and conversations, although I know they were not used for the latter. Each military compound such as ours included a PX (Post Exchange) where we could buy anything from sundries to sweaters, watches, gifts, etc. for special military currency in which we got paid (script). Of course most of what I earned (which was considerably more than any British salary I could have possibly made and completely tax-free) I had converted into pound sterling checks and sent to my parents for their support.

Amongst the many other things that were impossible to obtain for Germans were cigarettes, and this created ~~tremendous~~ great havoc. Never had I realized up until then what a tremendous addiction smoking is. German civilians would stoop into the gutter and pick up one inch buts that were wet from a near-by puddle to attempt to dry them and reroll them into a fresh cigarette. We of course could buy our normal allotment of two or three cartons of cigarettes each week, and one of those cartons would be worth a fortune to a German. Thus on the black market, well known to military authorities and which was later stopped through specially issued script, the American military including the ACEs would acquire watches, jewelry and even furniture to send home, all as a barter with cigarettes.

Going to and from Frankfurt, we would hitch a ride as there were mighty few buses. One weekend, coming back to our compound, I had to hitch a ride on a German truck as no military vehicle was in sight. Approaching Offenbach, I asked a German woman who was sitting on the truck with me, where I should get off for a particular address. "Well", she said, "I know exactly where that is because that is where I lived about a month ago". I suppose I should have felt awkward, but, remembering what the Germans had done to the Jews, I did not feel in the least embarrassed.

As 1945 drew to a close, I decided to ask for my first weekend pass ~~and~~ to try ~~to~~ and find my relatives in Berlin. Noone had hitherto been permitted to go to Berlin from the Western occupied zones as this entailed crossing the Russian zone. After strict instructions to stay in uniform at all times and only visit West Berlin, a few others and myself were finally issued a weekend permit. We travelled in a locked train and were not permitted to leave the latter until our final destination, Bahnhof Zoo, Berlin.

What a shock! I thought I had seen devastation in London and even in Frankfurt, but nothing compared with this, and noone had prepared me for such a sight. Bricks,

shredded furniture and household goods, glass, parts of automobiles, even remains of humans were strewn everywhere. The center of some of the main streets had been cleared, but on the sidewalks it was difficult to walk without stumbling over a shattered door frame or even stepping on a corpse hidden under the rubble. With difficulty I made my way to the Lietzensee Park and to my uncle's address.

Because of the uncertainty of my getting a permit to go to Berlin, I had not been able to notify my relatives. Consequently their surprise and joy was particularly great. It appeared that both my uncles, brothers of my mother, one married to a Protestant and the other to a Catholic, had survived the war although their food rations had been especially meager. The bag full of rolls and apples I brought them from our mess hall was the best present I could have brought them, and they divided everything up carefully so as to save some for the next day. I had also brought coffee and cigarettes from the PX. The coffee was like gold to them as they had not had any in years, and the cigarettes they saved (not being smokers) for special purchases on the black market.
I listened in silence and horror to the gruesome details of the demise of my uncle, aunt, cousins and grandmother at the hands of the Nazis. All had been killed in concentration camps with the exception of my beloved grandmother who died on the way to a camp. How can humanity ever forget or forgive such atrocities? That night and many times since I had nightmares thinking of my vanquished family. The weekend went by too fast, and before I knew it, I was back in Offenbach and at work in CCD.

During the spring of 1946 I had an unexpected visit from Bill Perry who, until then, had been writing me letters regularly. Although I had hoped I could prevent it, it was inevitable I suppose that he finally 'popped the question' on one of our dates. Although I liked him as a friend, there was never more to it from my side, and as gently as I could I tried to make this clear. This of course was

not good enough for Bill, and thus ended a beautiful friendship. He was a good, decent individual, but not the kind of person with whom I could picture spending the rest of my life.

In the meantime the 4 ACEs were having a wonderful time, and I particularly enjoyed my work with Capt. Goldsmith. On July 4th we had a holiday, and I attended a departmental picnic. It was a very hot day, and it felt so good to lie on the grass and soak up the sun. We had not enjoyed this kind of sunshine for weeks, and the warmth made me sleepy. An hour later, when I awoke from the noise of the music, my head ached, and I felt slightly nauseous. Luckily we were not too far from our billets and, trying not to draw attention to myself, I walked back to our apartment before anyone would miss me.,

Waking early the next morning in my bed was a strange experience indeed. Why was it that my arms and thighs felt so elephantine; I must be dreaming. "Whatever happened to you last night. I couldn't find you anywhere", it was ~~Monica~~ Birgit turning over in the bed on the other side of the room. I sat up and tried to remove my pajama top to look at my suddenly enormous arms, but I could not budge it. When I cried out in pain, ~~Monica~~ Birgit jumped out of bed and came over letting out a gasp. " You are beetroot red, and your skin looks like it is on fire. I think I better get you over to sick-bay but fast."

The Unit nurse took one look at me and immediately ordered me to be taken to the hospital in Frankfurt. There another nurse cut the pajama sleeves and pant legs off my arms ~~and arms~~ and legs and told me to lie on the examining table to await the doctor. There were enormous blisters, one next to the other, on my arms and legs, and I had a hard time moving my joints. The doctor finally came and pronounced the diagnosis: Third degree burns on my extremities. I was decidedly uncomfortable and made little response to the young military doctor's questions and even attempts at conversation. It was a relief to be in a hospital bed with a contraption over me that kept the sheet and blanket from touching my skin

since the slightest touch felt like a burning match held to my skin. I wore no pajamas, but the sheet covering the plastic hollow contraption over my body had me pretty well covered and, as long as nothing touched me, I felt quite well and healthy. My arms of course were heavily bandaged in gauze as the large blisters had all had to be opened to prevent infection. Carefully moving these ridiculously big and cumbersome arms to eat my lunch the next day, there was a knock at the door. In came the young doctor who had examined me the day before, and I was not surprised since I took it to be a routine visit. However, as an old German proverb says, 'firstly things happen differently and secondly than you expect'.

After a couple of cursory medical questions, an animated conversation ensued, and I suddenly realized that this was a rather charming young doctor whom I had paid little heed to in my misery the day before. "There is a dance in our officers' mess next Sunday and, if you feel up to it, I would be so happy if you would accompany me there. I know you'll feel much better by then, and even be able to wear clothes again." I laughed somewhat embarrassed thinking of my rather naked state at this moment. "I must tell you that I am married, but Lisa Behrens from your outfit will be attending with one of our doctors, and we could double-date which should surely be safe and harmless." Married - here I go again; I was speechless. I definitely have to decline. I just cannot get hurt again. My thoughts were racing. "I guess I'd be happy to go just this once". Whatever made me say that? The sunstroke must have affected my mind. Dr. Rogers was beaming and busily wrote down where to pick me up the next Sunday.

Dates started off slowly but soon multiplied, and soon I found myself looking forward to the next date as soon as one had ended. In September my leave time approached, and

I decided to sign up for the Swiss-Rome tour. With a group of other ACEs, WDEs (war department employees) and American military personnel, we were routed through Milhouse across the border into Switzerland. How glorious it seemed to be on my first real vacation since I was a child. Even though every one of us was in uniform, I felt like a real tourist, savoring the sight of the Swiss alps, the green meadows and the abundant food. All hotel accommodations had been prearranged for the group, but they were first class, five star hotels since we travelled as 'officers'. Two of my girl-friends from CCD were taking the trip with me, and the three of us had the best time hiking, sight-seeing and enjoying the scenery. There were several charming U.S. Army officers in our group, and in the evenings we dined and danced to our hearts' content. In Rome we were billeted at the famous Hassler Hotel and felt like royalty in our delux accommodations. There wasn't a Roman statue we didn't visit and admire before bording the troup train back to Frankfurt.

Upon arrival in Offenbach, I found a stack of letters and post cards Rog had written me during the two weeks of my absence. Soon it was time for Monica to take her leave which she decided to spend with an old friend in Prague. The one thing that marred her stay was that she was injured when a Czech automobile (of which there were not too many on the road) hit her as she crossed the street. She ~~returned with~~ had broken her leg ~~in a cast~~ and needed to be picked up by ambulance from Prague. ~~immediately filed a report with the CCD office on her accident. As behooves the military, before paying the claim, our Health Department wanted a full investigation of the accident.~~ Word got to my office that an ambulance was to be dispatched immediately together with an investigator to ascertain the details of the accident. What a chance for TDY (temporary duty) and a trip to Prague at government's expense! After a quick call to Rog, who got permission from his commanding officer for his TDY and the use of an ambulance, I presented myself as the investigator and, armed with the necessary papers, Rog and I left the next day in his ambulance en route to Prague.

Early on Sunday morning we drove into Prague. This had been such a bautiful city pre-war, but now it was deserted, not only because of the early hour, but also because in the Eastern zone people just did not wander out into the streets unnecessarily. Rog and I were tired, having driven most of the night. We studied the city map to see where we could find a billet where we could spend Sunday night as Monica was not to be released from the hospital until Monday morning. In the meantime I had some urgent business to attend to: I needed to go to the bathroom p.d.q. But where? Not a hotel, restaurant or open public place was in sight. Finally, we saw an old lady, carrying a laundry sack, slowly walking down the street. Rog stopped the ambulance, and I got out to ask her where I could find the nearest public toilet. Not knowing any Czech, I first asked her in German. Most educated Czechs know how to speak German, but obviously she was not one of them. I then tried in English, French, sign language (how did one sign a toilet?). Nothing helped. The old lady noticed the ambulance and obviously thought there must be a great emergency. She motioned me to follow her. I walked directly behind her, and Rog followed very slowly in the ambulance. Finally, after a five minute walk, she reached her destination - a church. She motioned me inside and almost instantly I was face to face with the pastor. Apparently she knew that in an emergency a priest was the one to turn to. I could not have felt sillier. I explained the language problem and my need, and with a smile, the priest directed me to the facilities. At least our Czech visit had started out with a laugh.

We found a suitable hotel, and, after checking in to two separate rooms, I went to interview the person who had run into Monica, got the details of the accident, insurance papers and all other documentation. The rest of the day we spent sight-seeing in Prague, ~~as~~ the city had the atmosphere of all Eastern zone cities with poorly dressed people, drab houses in need of paint and an unde-

finable feeling of unease. We had an extended dinner of poor food and retired to our rooms. "Be sure and lock your door tonight", Rog said when we kissed good night. "Why?" "Well, it is just better for you." After closing and locking my door, I finally realized what he had meant.

Unwittingly, Rog and I had become very close since last summer. In Offenbach or Frankfurt, where he was billeted near the hospital, we saw each other two or three times a week. Much as I had tried to put a halt to it in the beginning, I had to now admit that we truly enjoyed each other's company. Rog had taught me to play bridge, to drive a jeep, to ski and to enjoy good books. Besides, I had not met anyone else who could compare to his companionship. Of course we went to all officers' parties together and soon were considered a pair.

But back to Monica. We picked her up at the Prague General Hospital the next morning and, complete with leg cast, loaded her into our ambulance. The drive back to Offenbach seemed shorter than going, as is so often the case.

My work at CCD continued to be interesting, and soon I was promoted to Administrative Assistant. The salary was far above anything I could have made in England, and of course my entire wages were sent home monthly to my parents for their support. After all, my daily needs were taken care of, and all I needed was pocket money.

The year went by fast, and in September I had extended my contract for another six months. At this point many U.S. Army officers were converting to War Department Employees as they knew they had a good paying job here, which was not such a certainty back home. Besides, for many, as the popular saying went "They never had it so good".

By now March was approaching and with it the end of my contract. My relationship with Rog had become so close,

that I knew I had to call it quits now, or be hurt irreprably if I was not the first one to leave.

While playing bridge with Rog, his roommate Dick and a nurse, I mentioned my returning to England soon and how difficult I would find it to fit into British life once again after having spent a year and a half amongst Americans. "Why don't you emigrate to the U.S.", Dick said. "Because that is not as easy as it sounds. A prospective immigrant needs an affidavit from a U.S. citizen in order to be given an entry permit", I said. "What do you mean by an affidavit?" "Well, the U.S. citizen has to vouch for you, i.e. to promise in writing that if you cannot support yourself, he will pay whatever is necessary to keep you from going on welfare." "That surely is no problem. I'll do it for you, Anne", Dick volunteered. Smilingly I said, "that would be really generous of you." Silently I thought, what a typical American: Big hearted for the moment, but forgetting the promise the next day. What a poor judge of character I was at that time.

In the meantime, my day of departure came. Monica, Ashky and Bergit had all signed on for another six months. How lucky they were: They had nothing and noone to run away from. And how ironic: I had signed up for CCD ostensibly to run away from one entanglement and came back to run away from another. The good-bys at the railway station were tender and sad with many promises to keep in touch, which I did not intend to keep (and really did not until I was safely married two years later).

XV

Life back in England was drab, to say the very least, after my interesting job and colorful social life in the U.S. Army. Even though my parents were of course glad to have me back home, my own feelings were very confused. Food rationing was still in existance to a certain extent, and jobs were not exactly plentiful. Returning British army veterans had taken up most of the available jobs. Besides, my social life in London was of course non-existant. The one or two girl-friends I had from commercial college were not exactly my caliber, and of course I was still pretty upset at having left Rog behind and thinking that I would never again find anyone like him.

The first priority was to look for a job as my income was still very important not only to me, but even more so to my parents. The borders of course were still bringing in some income, but my excellent wages from the Army had been a mainstay, particularly since I had kept very little for myself. Answering an ad, I took a job as Secretary in a large chemical company, but I was miserable there. When I discovered that my desk was in a large secretarial pool ~~room,~~ I quit within a month. After having shared a large office with my boss, the Chief of Intelligence, in the U.S. Army, I found it impossible to adjust to being one of a large pool. So, back I went to talk to Mr. Greenbury at S. Weiss Ltd. I really went mainly to seek his advice and counsel rather than a job. He was thrilled to see me and proceeded to tell me that his Corporate Secretary was leaving the following week to get married and move to Canada and that he would like me to take the job if I wanted it. Since the salary was good, and I was really fond of Mr. G., I accepted his offer and started work the following week.

So, life was back to where I had started. I enjoyed the work, but life otherwise was humdrum. Ralph, my brother, had meanwhile been discharged from the British Army and was also back at work and living at home. His social life was also very minimal, and the few times he went to a dance or decided to take a girl out, it was more as a result of my pushing than because he really made an effort.

When Ralph first shed his army clothes, he had to report to the police as an "alien". Soon of course he was naturalized, and my parents too became British citizens soon after the war ended. Since I was over 18 years of age

at the time, I could not be naturalized with them. However, since I was also not yet 21, I could not be naturalized on my own. Consequently I was the only one in the Fischer family who was persona non grata, i.e. stateless.

About three months after I had arrived back in England, the mailman brought a large thick envelope with American stamps on it. What could it be? Upon opening it, I found two affidavits made out in my name, one from Dick Halpern, the internist, who had been Rog's roommate, and one from Dick's brother. It seemed that, even though Dick was a Captain in the U.S. Army, his pay was not sufficient for an affidavit, and he had thus envagled his brother to give me an affidavit also. That meant I could leave for the U.S. at any time. Long discussions ensued with my parents, and it was mutually decided that it was too good an opportunity for my future to let it pass. After all, it was argued, I could always come back if things really did not work out. My parents never knew how often I had toyed with that idea during my first six months in the U.S. and that I had been too proud to give up.

After corresponding with Dick, he and his wife had offered for me to share their apartment in New York where they were both doing their residency. So, in November of 1947 I boarded the Queen Mary for a second class passage to New York. Two other young girls shared my cabin, and we were all somewhat anxious and wondering what kind of life awaited us on the other side of the Atlantic. The Statue of Liberty looked half smiling and half menacing to me, and I could not yet decide which was her true face.

I had packed my ~~harmonica~~ accordion with my books in a separate carton, but when I reached the customs officer, he insisted on opening everything. When he saw the accordion with the words Hohner printed on it, he insisted that I could not bring that in to the U.S. "Well, then I would like to ship it back to my brother in London", I said. "I am sorry", he replied. "You need an export permit for that". "But I haven't even imported it yet!" "No matter, I can't let it in or let you send it back." After thinking it over for a few minutes, I told him to hold the carton for a few days and that I would return within four days to give him my answer.

When I returned to the port three days later, I spoke to a different customs officer and told him my story. "That is very simple", he said. "I will get a pocket knife and scratch out the word Hohner. If the accordion doesn't have the name on it, it is perfectly legal to bring it in to the U.S." So, that is what he did, and I gratefully wheeled out my carton with books and the instrument.

Dick and Barb's apartment was on 122nd Street, just at the border of Harlem at that time, not the most prestigeous neighborhood, but I was glad to have a place to stay. Since it was only a one bedroom apartment, I slept on the Murphy bed in the living room. This was pulled out of the wall each night, but since I was never a very heavy person, it easily collapsed back into the wall if I wasn't lying just in the right spot in the bed. I had arrived just before Thanksgiving, and Barb, not being much of a cook herself, had asked me if I knew how to prepare a turkey. Since I had never even seen one before, I figured it had to be much like a big chicken and roasted it as such. Of course I had no idea how much difference the size made, and we thus had an awfully tough turkey for my first Thanksgiving in the U.S.

Of course I immediately went to look for a job. Armed with a wonderful recommendation from Mr. Greenbury, I answered an ad from a Swiss export-import company, and since my knowledge of German helped, they hired me immediately. It was a particularly cold winter of 1947/48, and in my second week of work all of Manhattan was snowed in. The bus I always took refused to go any further on the second stop, and all transportation was at a stand-still. Not being equipped with boots, I trudged in my regular shoes through the knee-deep snow for over an hour before I finally reached my new office. Since unbeknownst to me, everyone had stayed home due to the deep snow, the only person there was the Manager who was amazed to see me. "What are you doing here in this ungodly weather?" he asked. "I thought I had to come to work regardless," was my reply. I think it endeared me to him from then on.

Since I was still sending money home to my parents, my finances were as limited as those of Dick and Barb who were paid a minimum as interns. So, for dinner we would go to a near-by deli, order a large Ceasar salad between us, and then fill up on the bread that was on the table.

In March of 1948 Dick and Barb's internship came to an end, and they decided they wanted to move back to their home in Los Angeles. To my amazement they asked me if I wanted to come with them. Well, it did not take me long to make up my mind. Although I enjoyed my job, the city of New York had been extremely bewildering to me. In spite of the fact that I had grown up only in major cities, i.e. Berlin and London, Manhattan somehow had a hurried pace with its millions of people milling around the streets at all hours, its noise, dirt and poverty. I soon realized that the only way to live well in New York was to have lots of money and be able to afford a nice apartment high up away from the noise and near the park. That was obviously out of my reach. Besides, I was terribly lonely there, and only my pride kept me from admitting this in my letters home. It was also a matter of alternatives, and thus I refused to give up and go back to England.

So, in the spring of 1948, off I went with Dick and Barb to California. We drove in Dick's old La Salle, packed to the gills with our luggage in the trunk, back seat and on the roof of the car. Our first stop was Baltimore, where we stayed overnight with Sherm Mellankov, an old friend of Dick's from medical school who was later to become Dean of the UCLA Medical School. Our five day drive took us through part of the South, small mid-Western towns, and finally through Arizona to California. In the latter two states I saw my first real oranges growing on trees which was exciting indeed. I remember my mother writing in my "Poesie Album" when I left Germany: "Möchten Dier die Rosen blühen im Dezember" (may roses bloom for you in December). This was meant metaphorically of course, but little did she know at the time that I would end up in a part of the world where the roses literally bloom in December.

Once in Los Angeles, I realized immediately that I must find my own quarters. So, I rented a room with a family in Beverly Hills, paying more than I really could afford, but valuing the fact that I was with a nice family, not too far from the Halperns and had the use of their kitchen. Armed with a terrific reference from my New York employer, I soon found a job with the Whittaker Corporation in Hollywood as Assistant to the Personnel Manager. To save money, I would walk each morning from Beverly Drive and Pico to La Cienega, a good two miles, from where I got a ride with one of the young men from work.

I was lucky to once again truly enjoy my work. I helped with interviewing factory workers, took care of the Credit Union and generally assisted the Personnel Manager in his work. Jobs were at a premium in those days, and many mornings when I arrived at my office on the first floor of the building, there would be a line around the block of men answering an ad for a tool and dye maker for instance. The hiring was fun, but often, when the government contract had been completed, I would be told to call in a certain number of employees and inform them that they need not report back to work the following Monday as there was no more work for the time-being. Not a pleasant task.

Socially, I was seeing less and less of the Halperns as Barbara had made it quite clear that she did not trust my friendship with Dick. Falsely, she presumed that, because Dick had brought me to the U.S., he must have had an affair with me in Europe. Although assuring her of my innocence, I could not altogether blame her for, had I been in her shoes, I might have suspected the same thing.

Through a cousin of Dick's I met another refugee girl my age, who introduced me to her ex-classmate, Gerda, who was to become my closest friend. Gerda took me to the '33 Club, a gathering of young German refugees, looking for a social life in a new country. I had been in L.A. about 9 months, when I joined Gerda to go on a skiing weekend that this Club had planned at Big Bear Mountain. Even though I had only made an attempt at skiing a few times with Rog in Germany, I joined the ~~class~~ group in Big Bear and enjoyed the beautiful snowy scenery.

Our group of skiers had come up to Big Bear on one big bus. On Sunday evening, when everyone was getting ready for the return trip, there was an announcement: "Sorry, ladies and gentlemen, but we are snowed in, and the bus will not be able to leave until at least tomorrow afternoon. If there are two people who feel they absolutely have to be back at their jobs tomorrow morning, we could accommodate them in a small van which will be leaving via the backroads in an hour." I thought of all the applicants I needed to interview the next day and immediately raised my hand. On the other side of the room I saw a young man who was also raising his hand. So the two of us bade farewell to the group and packed into the little van.

It was pretty crammed in the small van, making its way slowly in the deep snow down the backroads of the mountain, but my travelling companion seemed talkative, and we had plenty of time to get acquainted. When we got to the parking lot where he had parked his car, he offered to drive me home and subsequently asked for my telephone number. His name was Warner, a name that had been anglocized from Werner, and we found that we had a great deal in common in our backgrounds.

Although Warner dated Gerda first (after all, she was a much better skier than I), it was not long before I got a call from him, suggesting that he take me to a concert. We dated pretty steadily after that, and three months later we were engaged. Our marriage took place over Labor Day weekend in the judge's office in the courthouse in Santa Barbara. After all, neither of us could afford a big wedding, besides which the only family we had were sibblings of Warner's grandfather - not the most conducive to a wedding party. I must say, I got really cold feet the night before the wedding. "What am I doing marrying a man I have known for such a short time, and whom my parents have never even met?" Fortunately, by the next morning my love for Warner overshadowed the many quandaries I had.

We rented a furnished apartment in Hollywood, close to my office, and a year later I was naturalized as an American citizen.

Epilogue

This account was written after a happy 45 year marriage to Warner. I now have two grown children, a son and a daughter, both happily married for many years and each having two sons, giving me four delightful grandchildren. My daughter, Carol, with whom I am particularly close, has always encouraged me to write these memoirs, so that my children and grandchildren will always remember me and will know about the historic events in my life which have shaped me into a person who feels compelled to do community work. It is my small way of repaying the U.S.A. for giving me safe haven and for saying thank-you to the powers that be for letting me survive the many dangers and ordeals that have colored my life over this many years. Luckily, in the latter years, there have also been countless blessings.